

YOUNG KLONDIKE

STORIES OF A GOLD SEEKER.

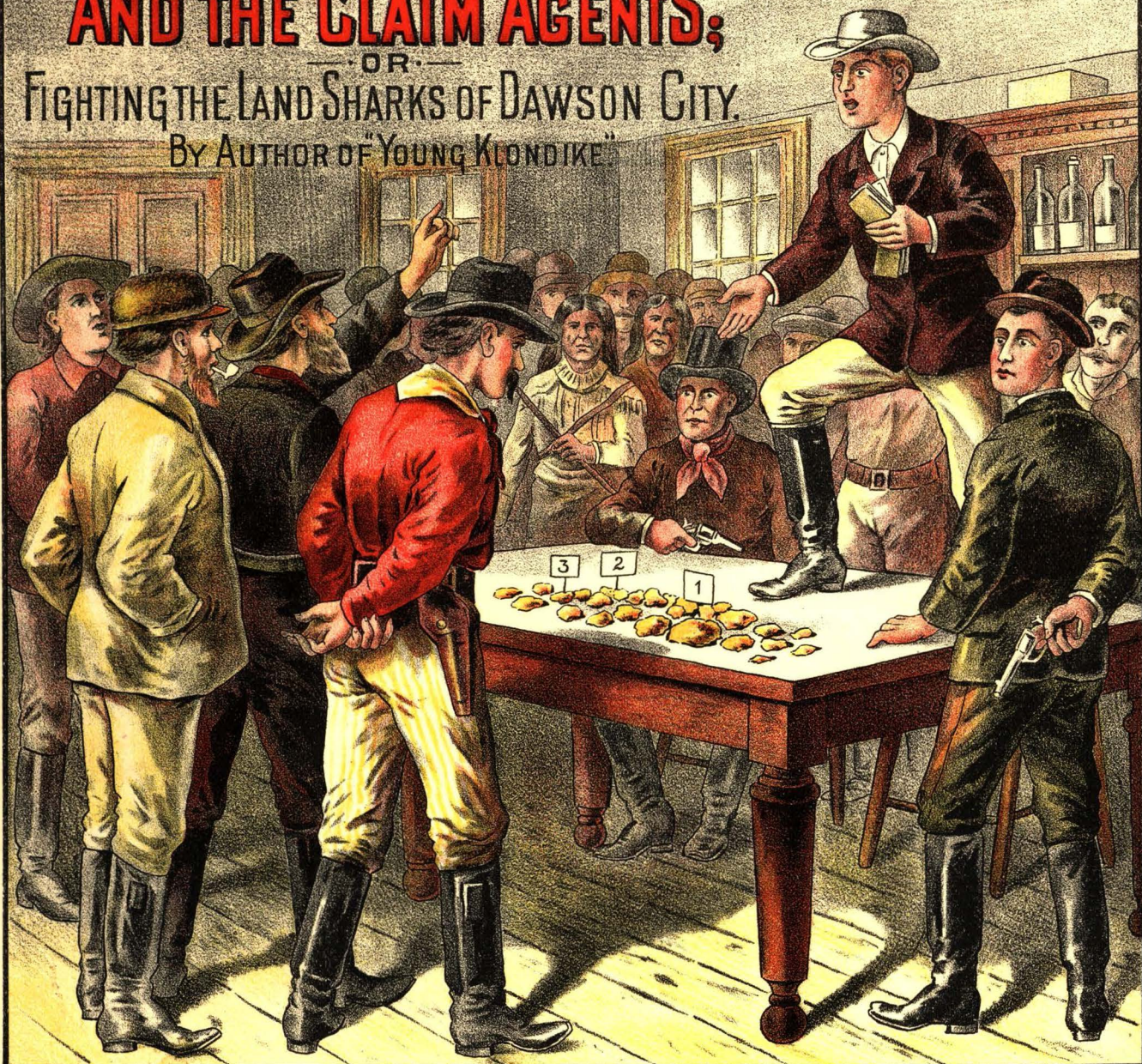
Issued Semi-Monthly—By Subscription \$1.25 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, March 15, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

No. 4.

NEW YORK, April 27, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.

"YOUNG KLONDIKE" AND THE CLAIM AGENTS; —OR— FIGHTING THE LAND SHARKS OF DAWSON CITY. BY AUTHOR OF "YOUNG KLONDIKE"



"How much am I offered for Claim No. 1?" cried Young Klondike, stepping on the table. Dick and the Unknown held their revolvers ready; a grizzled old miner held up his finger and bid \$5,000.

YOUNG KLONDIKE.

❖ Stories of a Gold Seeker. ❖

*Issued Semi-Monthly—By Subscription \$1.25 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, March 15, 1898.
Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1898, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington,
D. C., by Frank Tousey, 29 West 26th Street, New York.*

No. 4.

NEW YORK, April 27, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.

Young Klondike and the Claim Agents;

OR,

Fighting the Land Sharks of Dawson City.

BY AUTHOR OF YOUNG KLONDIKE.

CHAPTER I.

THE COLLISION ON THE CREEK.

"THERE don't seem to be any color here, Young Klondike."

"Not a trace, Zed, not a trace."

"May as well give it up, hadn't we? Ye gods and little fishes! I don't want to spend my time prospecting in a hole where there is nothing."

"We'll try one more painful and then decide."

"All right. I agree to that; in fact, I'll agree to any proposition you may make."

"As you usually do," laughed the young man thus addressed; "but I don't want you to do that. If you really think we are wasting our time here, we'll pack up and move on somewhere else."

"Oh, it's no waste of time if we can get a color. This hole is inside our line, and I don't want to say give up till we really know."

The speaker was a small stocky man, whose appearance was peculiar, considering the particular part of the world in which we find him.

In the Klondike country red shirts and slouch hats are all the fashion, but he wore an old black broadcloth coat and big cavalry boots coming up above his knees, while his head was covered with a battered plug hat, which up here on the banks of El Dorado Creek right in the heart of the gold diggings, certainly looked very much out of place.

His companion was a bright young fellow of nineteen, of intelligent face and quick, active manner.

Any one could see at a glance that Ned Golden was a smart boy—one of the kind that "get there."

Ned had already "got there."

He was one of the richest miners on El Dorado Creek.

Indeed, the luck of Young Klondike, as he was usually called, had become proverbial all over Alaska.

From Juneau to Dawson City the firm of Golden & Luckey were known.

Of this firm Ned was the senior partner. Dick Luckey, the junior, was Ned's old time friend and chum, who had come with him from New York City to dig gold in this wonderful Klondike country.

Far in the distance, over the hills, a column of smoke could be seen rising.

It came from the chimney of what was known in El Dorado Creek as Young Klondike's Mill.

To have visited that mill just then would have been to find Dick Luckey with his coat off hard at work superintending a gang of men, some busy in a mining shaft digging for gold; others hoisting up the pay dirt; others wheeling it to the mill; others still engaged in washing it by steam.

There were at least fifty men employed altogether, so it will be seen that partner Luckey had plenty to do.

Indeed so actively was the work being pushed at Young Klondike's Mill that Ned and Dick seldom left it together.

On this particular day, Ned had gone down the creek with his old companion for the purpose of prospecting other parts of their claim.

There was a big land boom on all along El Dorado Creek.

Our two boys had received many offers for a portion of their wonderfully rich holding, and it seemed to them that the time had come to divide it up into claims and sell all that they did not care to work.

Hence the prospecting on this particular morning. The work went right on.

Several pansful of gravel were washed, but the golden flakes appeared in none of them.

"It won't do, Zed," said Young Klondike, at last. "Gold may be here, but it lies deep. Let's give it up and get on."

"All right, dear boy. Whatever you say suits the Unknown."

They shouldered their rifles, and carrying pans, spades and pick-axes, walked on along the bank of the creek.

Ned made no allusion to the singular reply of his companion.

That Zed should style himself the Unknown, he seemed to take as a matter of course.

"We've already staked out three claims with good paying prospects," he said; "that's something. We shall strike another. I'd like to make it a round dozen—then we'll have a sale."

"Speaking of sales reminds me of the time when I sold out a hundred claims in the Transvaal in '68," said the Unknown. "You see I'd been working a big mine away up above Johannesburg, and—"

"No, you hadn't! Now, none of that!" broke in Ned.

It seemed very rude, but the Unknown did not take it so—he only laughed.

"What's the matter with my having sales as well as you?" he demanded.

"I don't care how many sales you have, but you didn't have one in the Transvaal in '68—that was years before the gold region was discovered out there."

"Who said '68?—I said '88."

"No, you didn't. You said '68. But enough of your yarns. Let's try our luck here."

"Huh! I remember a time when you used to like to hear my stories, Young Klondike."

"That was before I knew you. You've told so many of them since that—"

"Come now! Come now! We are getting the big head since we became millionaires."

Was this boy actually a millionaire?

Strange as it may seem, such was the case.

Young Klondike's luck in the diggings had been truly wonderful.

Some said he was worth a million alone; others claimed that it was the firm of Golden & Luckey, of which the Unknown and Miss Edith Welton were also members.

Certain it was, though, that they were the richest people in the Klondike, and they were proportionately respected, of course.

"We'll try it right here," said Ned, changing the subject abruptly. "This is about the end of our line on the shore. I should say that this gully ought to be a good place for a strike."

They threw down their tools and went to work.

A trench was staked out two feet wide by four feet long.

Ned seized a pick and turned up the grass, the Unknown removing the sods with his spade.

As soon as they had gone down about a foot they struck frozen ground.

This is always the way in Alaska, and also in the Klondike country, which, it will be remembered, is in British America.

The short summers do not generate heat enough to thaw out the soil below the depth of a foot or so.

It remains frozen all the year round, and is such hard digging that fires are usually built to thaw it out.

This was only a surface prospect, however, and Young Klondike did not consider it necessary to build a fire here.

In fact he did not expect to find gold to any amount.

In order to do that it would be necessary to dig down to a depth of at least twenty feet, when the "pay dirt," a coarse gravel lying on top of the bed rock, might reasonably be expected to appear.

All that he looked for was a color, that is a few flakes of gold here and there.

If the color should be found a regular full-fledged perfect shaft would be sunk.

What Young Klondike and the Unknown were engaged in now was the merest preliminary work.

The dirt was taken out and broken up fine and then put in the pan.

The Unknown brought water from the creek in another can and poured it on, then the pan was violently shaken, which if gold was present, would have the effect of sending it to the bottom of the pan by force of its greater weight.

The water was then poured off, as much of the dirt being allowed to go with it as possible, the remainder being carefully examined for gold.

"There's a color!" cried Ned, who was doing the panning. "I see it. It's a good show, too. This hole goes. I'll put a gang on it to-morrow first thing."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, you are right!" said the Unknown. "I see gold. Yes, and there's a good deal of it. What's the value of this claim, Young Klondike? Half a million?"

"Nothing of the sort! You know my ideas. I want to bring business to this place, and I'm going to sell cheap. Five thousand dollars will buy no claim on our land, but anything above that will."

"Perhaps you're right, but I believe these claims ought to bring more money, considering the size of, our strike."

"The sale will prove that. Everyone in Dawson City knows what we have got up here."

"Speaking of sails, there's one now!" cried the Unknown, pointing down the creek.

It was so. A small boat, with a rough sail made by stretching a piece of canvas between two sticks in some way attached to the bottom, could be seen working its way up the creek.

"Now, I wonder who that is?" cried Ned, stepping over to the edge of the bank.

"Some fellow after a job, probably," said the Unknown.

"Well, we'll put him to work if he's any good; what's that thing behind it? Great Scott! Why, it's a naphtha launch!"

"Didn't know there was such a thing in these diggings; but I'll be hanged if you ain't right."

"It certainly is, and it looks like a new one. It must be one of the big bugs of Dawson on the way to our place."

"Some land shark, I'll bet a hat."

"Your hat?" laughed Ned.

"No, dear boy, not my hat. That's a part of me, and wouldn't be of the slightest use to you."

"I should say not. There are two persons in the boat, Ned, a man and a girl."

"And one man in the launch. We shall have a good look at them in a minute, for they've got to come close in shore to avoid the rapids."

They stood watching the new-comers.

In a few moments they would have to pass directly under the little hill upon which they were, for here the channel ran close into shore, the remainder of the width of the creek being shallow and dangerous, the water running with great rapidity over a mass of loose rocks.

There was an old man and a very pretty young girl in the sail boat.

The man in the launch was young and stylishly dressed. Evidently he was no miner, and it was equally evident that he was no expert in managing the launch, for he kept entirely too close to the rapids—something which he all at once seemed to discover, and then with a sudden twist of the tiller he sent the launch over into the channel in such a clumsy way that it ran head on into the sail boat, causing it to lurch violently, and a flaw of wind catching it at the same instant the boat was suddenly overturned.

"Help! Help! Save my daughter! We can't either of us swim!" cried the old man.

He tried in vain to get a hold on the overturned boat.

It would have been an easy matter for the man in the launch to have given him a helping hand, but instead of doing that he just drove right ahead, to the amazement of the Unknown.

"Thunder! He means to let them drown!" cried the latter.

But Ned Golden said nothing.

It was not his custom to talk, but to act in an emergency like this.

Throwing off his hat and coat, he ran down the bank and plunged into the water, swimming out with bold strokes toward the drowning girl, who had just sunk for the second time.

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCING MR. MANTON MILLARD.

EL DORADO Creek is deep at the point where Ned Golden jumped into its icy waters.

Apparently there would have been little chance of the girl's life but for the promptness with which Young Klondike acted then.

The old man had managed to get hold of one of the rocks at the outer end of the channel.

He seemed entirely helpless here; it looked as if he would have been forced to see his daughter drown, if Ned had not caught her just as she was sinking for the third time.

"Keep tight hold of me, miss. I will save you!" Ned cried. "You have nothing to fear!"

"My father! Save my father!" gasped the girl. "Let me go! Oh, don't let my father drown!"

"I'll save you both!" replied Ned, coolly. "Don't worry! Just keep perfectly quiet! A few strokes will take us ashore!"

Meanwhile, the Unknown was giving vent to his feelings.

"You murdering brute," he shouted, "come back here with your tub and take that man off the rocks!"

"It's no business of mine," retorted the man.

"Why didn't they keep out of my way!"

"Come back! Come back!" roared the Unknown.

"Don't you hear what I say? Come back!"

And the man did come back.

It was difficult for him to turn the launch, but he managed it.

Perhaps this was because the Unknown had him covered with his rifle now.

"Don't you shoot me," snarled the man in the launch. "It wasn't any more my fault than it was his. I'm risking my own life doing this."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, you won't risk it if you don't take that man off the rocks! You'll lose it," cried the Unknown. "My barker will bark as sure as eggs are eggs, and you'd spoil your fine store clothes in the drink."

By this time Ned had gained the bank, which he helped the girl to ascend.

All danger was now over, for the man in the launch had reached the rocks.

What he said to the poor old fellow who clung to them, the Unknown could not hear, but he saw the man climb in.

Then the launch brought him ashore where the Unknown stood ready to help him out.

"Oh, how can I ever thank you, sir!" exclaimed the old man, as Ned came down the bank. "You saved my daughter's life. I'm only a poor man, but I shall never forget this."

"You needn't say a word. Your daughter has already thanked me," replied Ned. "May I ask your name, and where you are going? Perhaps I can help you still further; if I can I certainly will."

"My name is Barker," replied the old man, "and this is my daughter May. I've been working up on the Klondike, but the work gave out there. They told me that there was plenty to do up here in El Dorado, so I came. I'm heading for what they call Young Klondike's Mill; perhaps you can tell me

where it is, but we shall have to walk, now that I've lost my boat."

"Why, I am Young Klondike," replied Ned. "At least, that's what they call me. There's my mill right over there where you see the smoke. I want all the men I can get. Go right on and ask for Mr. Luckey. Tell him I sent you. He will see that you and your daughter are provided with dry clothes, and to-morrow I'll put you to work."

The old man thanked Ned profusely, but the girl seemed rather shy.

They started along the bank immediately, and Ned turned to face the man in the launch, who had now come ashore and stood nervously chewing upon an unlighted cigar.

"Well, sir, did you want to see me?" asked Ned, coldly.

"Are you Mr. Golden?" asked the stranger, extending his hand.

"That's my name," replied Ned, but he paid no attention to the hand.

"I did want to see you—that's what I came up El Dorado for," said the stranger, a good deal embarrassed.

"Then I'm blamed if I think you want to see him, Young Klondike!" broke in the Unknown. "A man who would do a thing like he did ought to be shoved off the earth."

"Well, you can't do it, then!" flashed the stranger. "I'm not addressing my remarks to you, sir!"

"But I'm addressing mine to you, then!" cried the Unknown. "If you say much more I'll arrest you! It would give me lots of pleasure to snap the handcuffs on your wrists."

"Arrest me! By what authority, I'd like to know."

"I'm a detective, sir! That's my authority, and I'll be blest if I don't use it, too."

"Bah! Detectives don't go here," retorted the man, turning his back on the Unknown.

"Mr. Golden," he added, "I am very sorry this thing has occurred. I was just about to come back and help those people when you jumped in. Let me suggest that you get into my launch and go up to your place. You are wet to the skin and may take cold."

"Don't you worry about me. I'm quite used to being wet," answered Ned. "Are you going to my place?"

"I am."

"What is your business there?"

"My business is with you. I can't very well state it here."

"And your name?"

"Ha! Didn't I mention it? My name is Manton Millard."

Ned started.

The name was that of one of the principal lawyers and claim agents in Dawson City.

It was generally understood that Mr. Manton Millard was a trickster and a thoroughly unprincipled

fellow—a man who would stick at nothing to gain his ends. There were many such people in the Klondike country at the time of which we write.

"Millard! Well, well!" cried the Unknown. "Young Klondike, don't you have anything to say to him. Leave it all to me."

"Indeed he won't," sneered the claim agent. "Mr. Young Klondike, you will have to deal with me. If you don't, I give you fair warning there is trouble ahead."

"I'll take my chances on that. I've nothing to say to you. You can talk with my partner here."

"Your partner! Is this Dick Luckey?"

"No; it ain't Dick Luckey," cried the Unknown.

"Then who the dogs are you?"

"My name is Snodgrass and yours is Mud if you don't make tracks out of here. Oh, you needn't laugh, Young Klondike, that's my name to-day."

"And to-morrow it will be something else," mused the lawyer. "I've heard about you, my friend, and I want nothing to do with you. Good-by, Mr. Golden, you'll have to listen to me. I'll meet you at the mill."

Thus saying, Mr. Manton Millard stepped into his launch and starting the engine went spinning off up the creek.

"Good Heaven! Can there be anything in his threats!" exclaimed Ned.

"Nothing—take my word for it!" replied the Unknown.

"Zed, I wish you hadn't been so savage. It would have been better to speak him fair. Why don't you tell me your name? It is too awkward for anything in a case like this."

Now Ned had touched on one of the Unknown's strongest peculiarities, and he had many.

Although they had now been associated for many months, Ned had not the remotest idea what his name really was—hence his title, the Unknown.

The man was a detective—that much he had proved.

He had been in every part of the world; he spoke all sorts of languages and was, taken altogether, a wonderfully well informed man.

His claim was that he was tracking some mysterious criminal, and he was always pouncing upon strangers and threatening to arrest them, declaring that at last he had found his man, only to acknowledge in the same breath that he was mistaken.

Altogether the Unknown was a most peculiar character, as any one who has taken the trouble to follow this description will be forced to admit.

But he had proved himself a good friend to the firm of Golden & Luckey, and both Ned and his partner held him in great respect.

Assisted by the detective Young Klondike now gathered up the tools, and they made all possible haste back to the mill.

This was a substantial frame structure standing in a valley at some distance back from the creek.

Nearer the shore was a well built hut with a number of cabins surrounding it.

The hut was the home of our Klondikers, the shanties were occupied by their men.

It was a busy scene around the mill, for here mining was being carried on on a larger scale than at any other point at El Dorado Creek.

Ned looked down upon it with a troubled face, as he and the Unknown descended the hill.

"Hello! Here come Dick and Edith!" exclaimed the detective. "I'll leave you to talk to them, Ned, and take these things to the tool house. Don't you allow yourself to be one bit disturbed."

"Hello, Ned!" called the young man, who now came hurrying up the hill in company with a very pretty girl, certainly no older than himself, and his age was nineteen, the same as Ned's.

"Hello, Dick! Edith, where have you been?" called Ned.

"I've been duck shooting up the creek, Ned. I've brought back twenty pair," replied the girl.

"Your usual luck. There's no such shot in all the Klondike as you are, I do believe."

"Nonsense!" laughed Edith. "I'm only fair. Have any luck prospecting? Why, you are all wet! What's the matter? Did you tumble in the creek?"

Of course this question called for its answer, and while Ned is explaining, we may as well state that Edith Welton had been associated with Ned Golden and Dick Luckey ever since they first arrived in the Klondike country.

In fact, they came together before that.

Edith was a California girl who started for Alaska in search of her father.

The steamer in which she took passage was wrecked and deserted by captain and crew, Edith being left behind.

It was Ned Golden's good fortune to rescue Edith from the wreck, and when upon their arrival at Dawson City it was discovered that Mr. Welton had gone to South Africa, the girl decided to cast her fortunes with her friends, and in company with Mrs. Colvin, who acted as both companion for the girl and house-keeper for the whole party, Edith had been with Ned and Dick ever since, being a silent partner in the firm.

She was a particularly bright girl and of a very cheerful disposition.

She laughed heartily when Ned described the scene on the shore.

"Zed is at his old tricks!" she cried. "Shall we ever find out his name? I doubt it. And you are at your old tricks too, Ned, saving girls from drowning; but what makes you so solemn? You look as if you had lost your best friend."

"I'm bothered, Edith. Just a moment and I'll explain. Dick, did that old man and his daughter come here?"

"Yes. I sent them to Rafferty's shanty. Mrs. Rafferty will look after them—especially the girl."

"That's all right. You can put the man to work."

"I'll do it. Haven't seen anything of Millard, though."

"I was just about to ask. Strange he hasn't come. He must have passed the place or hung back."

"Or gone in the cave," said Dick, anxiously.

"Impossible. No one knows the entrance to the cave but ourselves."

"Don't you be too sure. If this fellow is what he claims to be he may know."

"He ain't! He can't be! He mustn't be! Dick Luckey, I won't be swindled by this shyster! I mean to stand by my rights to the last!"

"Hello, Ned! What's wrong?" cried Edith. "You've been keeping something back from me."

"Edith, we have. The fact is, we didn't want to worry you," said Dick.

"It worries me more than anything else could, to think you'd do such a thing. What is it? Make a clean breast of it, or I shan't forgive you."

In answer Ned pulled a letter out of his pocket and handed it to Edith.

It was postmarked Dawson City, and the date was over six weeks before.

"Have you been keeping this secret from the silent partner all this time?" cried Edith. "Boys, this ain't fair."

"Read the letter," said Dick. "It's a serious matter. I'd like to hear it again myself, so read it out loud."

Edith opened the letter, and read as follows:

"GOLDEN & LUCKEY.

"GENTLEMEN:—I have this day received instructions from Mr. Barnard J. Rice, the rightful owner of the claim you have been so impudently working on El Dorado Creek, to enforce his rights and have you removed from the land in question. It has long been a mystery to me how you dared proceed in so open and high handed a manner, knowing as you must know that you have no right whatever to this claim.

"This land was granted to my client a year ago, and the necessary assessment work was done by one Calvin Remington. I understand you claim to have purchased from Remington. You must be well aware that a man cannot sell what he never owned. Possibly you may be laboring under a misunderstanding, but to my eyes it has every appearance of fraud. At all events you must at once vacate the premises. You are hereby notified to leave the land and remove all encumbrances from it within thirty days; also to render an accounting of the gold you have already dug. I am informed that you are quite responsible outside of this claim, otherwise I should immediately get out a warrant for your arrest. Let me advise you to give this matter immediate attention, as a failure on your part to do so will surely lead to future troubles.

Your obedient servant,

"MANTON MILLARD."

"Good gracious! That's cool!" cried Edith.

"Cool! I should say so!" echoed Dick. "Do you know, Edith, it has been worrying Ned half to death."

"Well, you needn't let it, then," said Edith. "We know that we've got the deeds from Cal Remington all right."

"Of course we've got the deeds," said Ned, "but suppose they are worthless, just as this man says?"

"It can't be so, can it Ned?"

"Well, I don't know, Edith. Remington was a lunatic. I suppose it was running a big risk for us not to have investigated our purchase more closely than we did."

"But you had the claim recorded, Ned. You hold the recorder's certificate."

"Only a certificate of transfer. The original certificate should have been issued to Remington. Perhaps it was, but it was not among his papers. I feel very much concerned about it all, for our claim has already paid us over a million, and is paying still; to be turned out of it now would be a bad piece of business, and that's a fact."

"We ain't going to be!" cried Edith. "It's the work of the land sharks of Dawson City, and we'll fight them to the last."

"That's what we will," echoed Dick.

"Have you done anything about it?" asked Edith.

"Nothing at all. We didn't even answer the letter."

"By the advice of the Unknown, I suppose?"

"Exactly."

"What was his idea?"

"He considered this letter only a bluff. He thought we ought to wait and see what the next move of these land sharks would be."

"Is that all?"

"He claimed that they looked upon us as a couple of boys, and thought that we'd scare easy."

"Probably he is right."

"Very likely."

"Yes; Manton Millard has come here himself."

"If that man really was Manton Millard," said Edith; "there is a regular gang of these fellows in Dawson City, I have heard. They think we'll be easy game, and that's why they've gone for us."

"And now they've made their next move."

"That fellow may not be Manton Millard at all, Ned," said Dick. "Edith is dead right."

"More than likely there isn't any such person as Manton Millard," said Edith.

"Nor Barnard J. Rice, either," added Dick. "We shall have to get to Dawson and see what it all means, Ned."

"We have to find out what has become of this stranger, first of all," said Ned, "and we may as well go about that right now."

But the disappearance of the stranger proved to be a mystery not so easily solved.

The boys started out in earnest now, but they could not find him.

He was not on the creek; they walked back to the place where the accident occurred.

That he could have passed the camp by accident was out of the question.

To be sure the mill could not be seen from the creek, owing to its situation behind the hills, but the hut and the shanties were all in plain sight, and everybody knew Young Klondike's camp.

Another mystery was on hand, too.

The Unknown had vanished.

This, however, was not at all alarming.

The Unknown was in the habit of vanishing.

Indeed, they were never disturbed at anything that singular genius did.

Toward night Ned went up a hill near the camp and fired one shot, then waited a moment, then fired two in quick succession.

This was the regular signal for the detective.

If he was anywhere within hearing he was expected to answer it, but no answer came.

"He's off on one of his mysterious absences," thought Ned.

He knew that it was no use to go any further and he returned to the house.

It was now evening.

The end of the summer had come and the days were growing shorter.

Lights shone from the windows of the shanties.

The men were passing in and out. Some could be seen eating their supper inside the open doors; others were sitting in front of the shanties smoking and talking.

All bowed politely as Ned passed among them.

Young Klondike was an easy and a liberal master, and very popular among his workmen.

Entering the hut Ned found the table spread for supper.

Stout Mrs. Colvin had prepared the evening meal, and there was no better cook in all the Klondike country than Edith's friend.

Edith was there, too, and Dick came in a moment later.

They drew up around the table, Edith's big dog Rover sitting on the floor by her chair, eagerly watching for the choice bits which he knew would come his way.

They talked over their affairs as they ate.

"The whole amount of the matter is we have been made a mark by a lot of Dawson City land sharks," said Ned, "and now, Dick, and you, too, Edith, I want you to agree with me in just one thing."

"What's that?" asked Dick.

"Let us fight this battle out alone. We won't drag anybody else into it, and we won't let our men know that there is anything wrong."

"Agreed to," said Edith.

"Decidedly the best plan," said Dick, "providing it can be carried out."

"We may all have to go to Dawson City, and if we do we'll go together," continued Ned. "I'll send

out for Mr. Bowers, the foreman; he's reliable; we'll post him how to act in our absence."

Ned rang a bell and Moosha, an Indian boy, who did chores round the hut, appeared.

"Moosha, tell Mr. Bowers I'd like to see him," said Ned.

In a few moments the foreman's knock was heard.

"Mr. Bowers," said Ned, when he entered, "it may be that I shall conclude to go down to Dawson suddenly. Mr. Luckey and Miss Welton, and even Zed may go with me. If you wake up some morning and find us missing, you will understand what it means and take charge of everything till we return."

"Very good, sir, I'll do the best I can," replied the foreman. "Do you expect to be long gone?"

"It is hard to say, but I don't think it will be very long."

"When do you think you will go?"

"That I can't tell either. It might be to-morrow morning, or it might be next day or next week, or not at all. I only want you to be prepared. You will bring all gold in here as usual, and keep an armed guard around the hut, night and day, and on no account let any one land on our claim who may come up the creek, without a written order from me."

"That's all right, sir. Your orders shall be carried out to the letter," said the foreman.

They talked over details a few moments, and then Mr. Bowers withdrew.

Then Ned got out his banjo and began playing, and Edith sang and they had one of their usual jolly evenings just as though nothing had gone wrong.

Ned was not the sort to make everyone around him uncomfortable because he felt worried.

Nevertheless he felt very much worried that night. Fortune had favored Young Klondike.

From poor clerks he and Dick Luckey had suddenly become millionaires.

Their hope was to double their capital that year, and then sell out and return to the States to enjoy their wealth.

Was their fortune in danger?

Ned thought so when he and Dick turned in that night.

He felt that an unknown enemy was about to strike a blow meant to crush him.

That enemy was the mysterious Mr. Manton Milard.

CHAPTER III.

THE MIDNIGHT WARNING.

It was about ten o'clock when Young Klondike lay down beside Dick Luckey and tried to sleep.

It was hard work at first, but at last sleep came.

Ned was dreaming of New York and the old days when he was a clerk, when all at once he was brought up with a start by hearing a sudden sharp rap on the window alongside his bed.

As he sat up in bed listening, he thought at first

that he must have been mistaken—that it was all a dream.

Then all at once the rap came again.

It was no mistake this time.

Ned flung up the window, drawing back in surprise as he saw a woman's form outside.

"Mr. Golden! Mr. Golden! I must speak with you?" came to his ears in a hurried whisper.

"Who are you?" asked Ned, for it was too dark to see anything distinctly.

"I am May Barker. I am the girl whose life you thought you saved."

It was a singular answer.

All Ned's suspicions were aroused on the instant.

"I'll come right out," he said.

"No! Listen as you are," breathed the girl. "I may be watched—more than likely I am. Meet me on the shore in ten minutes. You know where the white rock is—meet me there, and come alone. Now give me time to get away."

Ned saw her glide off into the darkness.

He instantly determined to go, but to take Dick with him.

Perhaps this was a trick of the enemy's. Ned felt that to go alone would be a risk that he had no right to run.

He awoke Dick and explained.

They hurriedly dressed themselves, and seizing their rifles, started for the shore.

Ned went in advance, Dick stole after him.

"Keep out of sight and don't let her catch a glimpse of you," was Ned's caution when they started away from the hut.

It was but a short distance to the shore, and he knew the white rock perfectly well.

When he reached it the girl May rose up from behind it.

"So you have come," she whispered. "Mr. Golden you are on the verge of a great trouble. If I can save you from it I mean to do it; you meant to do me the greatest kindness that it is possible for one human being to do for another—you meant to save my life!"

"Well, that's true," said Ned, greatly puzzled. "I certainly went into the water after you."

"And you were deceived. I can swim as well as you and so can my father. What you thought was an accident was really nothing of the sort; it was only done to deceive you, and divert your attention. If you had looked down the creek at that moment instead of looking at me you would have known why."

"What can you mean?" asked Ned.

"That there were two boats coming up the creek at that very moment. The boss didn't want you to see them, so he ran into our boat knowing that we could get ashore easily enough. That gave them a chance to pull in under the point out of sight. It was all a part of the plot against you. Of course, we did not expect to see you there."

Ned drew a long breath.

"So there is a plot against me," he said.

"There is. Mr. Golden, I appreciate what you

meant to do for me and I want to make some return."

"You are making it now?"

"I can't stand by and see you robbed. You don't know who my father is."

"You are going to tell me—I feel sure of that."

"Yes. You bought this claim of one Cal Remington, a lunatic."

"I did."

"He had no title to it and you have none. The Claim Agents of Dawson were willing to let you spend your money developing it, but now that it has become successful they intend to take it away from you."

"Let them try! They won't succeed!"

"I can't tell about that, but you want to go to Dawson at once and look after your interests."

"I shall do it; but about these boats?"

"Wait a moment, I'm coming to that. They mean to rob you."

"I don't fear them. The Branch Bank of British North America is a safe institution."

"You don't understand. The money you have put in the bank they don't expect to get; it is the gold you have hidden in the cave."

Ned gave a violent start.

Here was this stranger showing knowledge of a secret which he supposed was known only to himself and his friends.

The cave alluded to opened in under the hill a short distance along the shore.

In it Young Klondike had concealed his gold.

Each night the output of the mine was delivered at the hut, and that was the last the workmen saw of it.

If any one had attacked the hut, expecting to find treasures, and had captured it, they would have met with disappointment.

The gold was not in the hut. Every ounce of it was concealed in the cave.

To find now that this girl knew of the secret was startling enough, and Ned's answer showed just how he felt.

"Now you begin to understand," said May Barker.

"Mr. Golden, my father is not a good man. He formerly worked here with Cal Remington. He knows all about the case. In Dawson he fell in with a gang of thieves, and they engaged him to come here with them and help them steal your gold."

"And that man Manton Millard is in it?" asked Ned.

"Manton Millard I do not know. The man you talked with on the shore is named Raymond Wild; he is a thief and a scoundrel, and would stop at nothing to attain his ends. They mean to rob you tonight. I tell you all, but spare my father. As for the rest I don't care what becomes of them. You have had your warning, Mr. Golden. I have done my part, and I am going now; all I ask is that you spare my father if you can."

She glided away along the shore, and was lost in the shadows in a moment.

Ned called after her, but she did not even look back.

At first Ned thought of hurrying after her; then he changed his mind and went back to Dick, who was crouching behind a big boulder watching with his rifle all ready.

"Well, what was it?" Dick asked.

"Only that we are being robbed—that's all," said Ned coolly.

"Thunder! What do you mean?"

"I mean the cave, Dick. Quick! We've got to see the end of this! Let's go for Edith—we want her help."

Ned started for the hut on the run.

Dick followed close behind him, and as they ran Ned explained.

"We'd better call up all hands," said Dick. "We've got force enough to wipe 'em out ten times over."

"No, sir. I don't do it."

"But it would be safer."

"Look here, Dick, remember our agreement. We don't know much about these men. If they learn where we hide our gold our lives may not be safe. That's Zed's opinion and it's mine. Let's manage this business ourselves if we can, and only call for help as a last resort."

"I believe you are right, Ned. We've been able to fight our own battles up to date."

"Yes, and we will be to the end, and don't you forget it. Mark my words, the Unknown is on the watch. There is no real danger yet, or we should have heard from him."

"Of course that fellow Millard must have gone into the cave—that's why he didn't show up."

"You are wrong. He went back to his boats—I'm sure of it. He ain't Millard, though. As I told you the girl says his name is Raymond Wild."

They were at the hut by this time.

Hurriedly entering they secured the door and Ned climbed the ladder and knocked on the trap door, which communicated with the loft where Edith and Mrs. Colvin slept.

"Trouble, Edith!" called Ned. "We want you and your rifle right away."

"Coming!" was the answer. "Give me three minutes, Ned."

"Somebody at the door!" breathed Dick.

"No!"

"Yes. I heard someone. There! What do you say now?"

Certainly someone had gently tried the latch.

"Perhaps it is the Unknown," said Ned.

"We'll get the knock if it is."

Even as he spoke there was one low rap, then a pause, then two others in quick succession.

"Zed!" called Ned through the keyhole.

"You bet, Young Klondike," came the answer. "Open the door, dear boy."

Ned lost no time in obeying.

The Unknown sprang into the room.

He was very pale, and there was blood all over his face.

"Great Heavens! you are wounded!" gasped Ned.

"Nothing! Nothing! A mere scratch. There's trouble, Ned."

"I know it."

"What do you know? There's a gang of robbers at the cave."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROBBERS IN THE CAVE.

"ROBBERS in the cave!" cried Edith, coming down the ladder as the Unknown gave utterance to the startling announcement with which the last chapter closed.

"That's what!" gasped the Unknown. "I was laying for them! I expected it! They shot at me, but thank Heaven, they didn't shoot to kill."

"The gold! Are they loading it on to their boats?" gasped Ned.

"You bet!"

"Hadn't we better call Mr. Bowers and the men?" cried Edith.

"No, no, no!" said the Unknown. "Mind what I tell you, and don't do it. Edith, my dear, you are good for them every time. There's only four. Ned, that man Barker has betrayed us! Oh, the scoundrel! Millard is in it, too! I knew there was something in the wind."

Don't think that they stood idly talking thus.

Not an instant had been wasted.

Edith was buckling on her cartridge belt.

She now seized her rifle and they quietly left the hut, Ned explaining to the Unknown what he had heard as they hurried toward the mill.

Now it may seem rather odd that they should go toward the mill, when it has been expressly stated that the cave opened on the shore of El Dorado creek.

There were two entrances to the cave, both of which had been kept a profound secret from the workmen, and yet these worked daily in one end of the cave, but without understanding that there was anything more to it than what they saw.

Entering the mill they descended the ladder into the shaft.

This was about twenty feet deep and the greater part of it really formed part of the cave.

Ned, who was first down, did not go to the bottom of the ladder, but stepped off on a little ledge when he had descended about ten feet.

At the back of this ledge was a large flat stone wedged in between two rocks.

As Ned had himself placed this stone he knew just how to remove it.

It closed the mouth of a narrow passage into which they crawled, Ned putting back the stone into place.

They were now obliged to crawl along for a consid-

erable distance, and then descending, come into a broad tunnel where they were able to stand up straight.

This was the main cave and Ned peered ahead through the darkness, his eyes fixed upon a faint light in the distance, which so far had guided them like a star.

"That's where they are working?" he whispered.

"That's the place," said the Unknown. "Now listen for a moment while I tell my story, Ned. You may as well understand the situation as it is."

"But ain't we losing time?"

"Time enough. I only want a moment. You see, I suspected that man Millard from the first."

"He ain't Millard," said Ned. "I told you his name is Wild."

"That's what the girl told you, and that's all you know. She may be deceived. She may be deceiving you and trying to lead us all into a trap."

"I don't believe it."

"Time!" breathed Dick. "Let the Unknown speak."

"Call him by whatever name you please. I suspected him," said the detective, "and I immediately thought of the cave, so I posted myself near the entrance, first ascertaining that there was no one inside, and there I stayed with my watch eye open, waiting and waiting, until—well, Young Klondike, I may as well acknowledge the corn—until my watch eye went to sleep!"

"Ah!" ejaculated Ned, "I was afraid! But it ain't like you, Ned."

"Kick me, Young Klondike! Kick me! By the Jumping Jeremiah, I deserve it! Yes, I slept on my post, and the next thing I knew I heard a noise in the cave."

"But how in the world did they get by you, if you were between the rocks?"

"Don't ask me? There's the mystery, for there they were in the cave, all four of them, pulling over our boxes of gold. Stupid idiot that I was, I ran right into them; you see, I was only half awake."

"Never knew you to do anything like that," said Dick, "and I can hardly believe it now."

"Thank you for your good opinion, but I did it, all right or all wrong," continued the Unknown, "and I paid for it. First I knew a light flashed up, and I saw Millard, or Wild, and that scoundrel, Barker, and two other men. They saw me and fired. Of course I retreated, but I carried this man with me. They followed, but they didn't catch me. Now, boys, you know all I have to tell, except that they were loading the gold into a boat."

"Into a boat in the cave?" cried Edith. "How in the world did they get the boat in there?"

"Don't ask me, for I can't tell you. How did they get past me? There's only one explanation—there must be some other entrance to the cave."

"That's the way I figure it out. Probably Barker knows what we don't."

"Come on," said Ned, setting his teeth. "I don't like to shoot to kill, but——"

His pause was expressive.

It is hard to stand idly by and see one's self robbed in such wholesale fashion as this.

"We are out for business," said the Unknown. "Edith, my dear, a lot depends upon you."

Edith was by long odds the best shot in the party, and she understood perfectly well what was expected of her.

As they drew nearer the light they were able to get a glimpse of five figures moving about in the tunnel.

One of them was a woman's figure.

Ned saw that it was May Barker.

Had the girl tried to betray him, after all?

Did she think he would hurry down to the cave alone?

Certainly it looked very much that way.

"There's your girl all right, Young Klondike," whispered the Unknown.

"We are here for business," said Ned. "Edith, are we close enough?"

"Yes."

"Shall we fire now?"

Edith sighted the figures with her rifle.

"Yes."

"Where's the boat?" asked Dick. "I can't see it at all."

"Nor I," said Ned. "Could you have been mistaken, Zed?"

"Not on your life! One moment, Edith! I want to make out what they are doing if I can."

"They are gathering up the last of those small nuggets," said Ned. "Don't you remember the lot we dumped night before last in that niche between the rocks?"

"That's what they are doing! That's where they are working," said the Unknown. "Heavens! Where's the girl gone? She went against the wall and vanished like a ghost!"

"Now's our time to act," said Ned. "Ready, Edith?"

"All ready!"

"And you, Dick?"

"I'm ready."

"Let her go!"

Three rifles cracked then.

There was a loud outcry at the other end of the tunnel.

The smoke obscured their eyes so that it was impossible to see a thing.

"Shall we move forward?" breathed Edith, "or shall we fire again?"

"Wait," said the Unknown. "I'm listening."

All listened.

The most profound silence reigned in the cave.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah they've gone! That's what!" cried the Unknown suddenly. "Ye gods and little fishes! While we are fooling away time here those birds are flying away!"

It was perfectly evident that the Unknown was right.

The smoke had now cleared and they were in total darkness, the light at the other end of the tunnel having suddenly disappeared.

"Careful! Careful!" breathed Ned. "This may be a trap."

"We must know," whispered the Unknown. "Move forward, quietly. Not a sound now! We can't go astray and I can find the lantern all right by keeping close to the wall."

The lantern referred to hung in the niche near where the gold had been concealed.

The Unknown was in advance and the first to reach it.

So cautiously had they moved over the sandy floor of the cave that their footfalls gave back no sound.

In order that they might not become separated each kept a hold on the other.

At last the Unknown stopped and struck a match. They had reached the niche and his hand was on the lantern.

As the light flashed up they saw that they had the cave all to themselves.

The robbers had vanished, but there was blood on the sand, the trail leading over against the solid wall and there vanishing.

"Gone! All gone!" cried Edith, looking about.

It was a fact.

There had been over a hundred thousand dollars in dust and nuggets in the cave.

There was scarcely a trace of it.

A little pile of nuggets lay in the niche alluded to.

That the robbers had been engaged in gathering up this remnant when the attack was made, there could be no doubt.

"There you are, Young Klondike!" cried the Unknown, bitterly. "Kick me! Kick me! It is all my fault."

"There's no time to waste kicking you, Zed. What we want to do is to follow up these thieves?" cried Ned.

He seized the lantern and started for the mouth of the cave.

But before he had taken a dozen steps all were startled by a loud crash.

A big block of stone had fallen out of the wall at the very point where the bloody trail came to an end.

"Here's the way they went!" cried Edith. "This is new to us."

"And the way they came in," said the Unknown. "Of course, this leads out to the shore."

They listened and could hear voices talking at the other end of the passage.

"They are close to us," said Dick. "Put out that light, Zed."

The unknown instantly extinguished the lantern.

"Pick him up and put him in the boat!" they heard a voice say. "The whole gang may be after us. There ain't a moment to be lost."

"Shall we move?" breathed Dick.

"The old way! They are on the shore just below the entrance," announced Ned. "Follow me!"

They ran for dear life toward the opening they knew.

Probably it was safer than to have ventured through the new passage in the dark, but the distance was greater, and when they came out on the shore, under the stars, Ned threw up his hand with a gesture of despair:

"I'm late!" he cried. "They are off with our gold!"

They could see the little naphtha launch steaming down the creek.

It had two boats in tow.

Young Klondike knew only too well that these boats must be loaded with the missing gold.

CHAPTER V.

SWAMPED ON THE ROARING BULLS

"OUT of range, Edith!"

"Out of range, Ned."

"Then there's nothing left but to get our boat and follow them."

"Of what use? That launch will leave us miles behind."

"We've got to do it," said the Unknown. "If you don't go with me, I shall go alone. I'll follow that scoundrel, Millard, if the chase takes me to the end of the earth."

"And it will be like the everlasting chase for your mysterious man," said Dick, dolefully; "but all the same I agree with you. We've got to go."

"Stop a moment," cried Ned; "we don't want to be in too big a hurry. Where is this chase actually going to end? Of course it will be Dawson. They came from there and they are going back there. We've got to fight our battle out with the land sharks on their own ground."

"Admitting you are right, what are you driving at?" demanded the detective.

"Just this; we had better go prepared to put it through to Dawson."

"Just so, but who's to look after our interests here?"

"Bowers—I've arranged it all."

"Thunder! How much gold will there be left for us? The mine will be sure to run dry every day we are away."

"Bowers is an honest man and won't steal himself, and I think he can be trusted to keep something of a watch on the others."

"But must we call Bowers up and tell him about this affair? You know my views, Young Klondike. If we are going to continue to work this claim, I say, at all hazards, let's keep the secret of the cave away from the men."

"Precisely what I mean to do. I've arranged all that."

Ned went on to explain the arrangement he had made with Bowers.

"That's most fortunate," said the detective. "Just the very thing. We'll slip off and say nothing to nobody."

"That's the idea," said Ned. "You be getting the boat ready and I'll run up to the hut a moment."

He hurried away, leaving the others to go to the cove where the boat was kept.

Ned had fully made up his mind that this trip was to end only at Dawson City.

Once there he was determined to call on the true Manton Millard and know the worst.

"I may as well go prepared," he thought. "If I find they've got any ground to stand on I'll have an auction, sell out the whole business for what it will bring. Then others can fight this battle to a finish, and we'll strike in somewhere else."

Arrived at the hut Ned hastily gathered together such articles as they were likely to need on their trip.

Among other things he pocketed three small lots of golden nuggets, each lot being in a separate bag.

These were from the different prospect holes that he and the Unknown had dug.

Ned knew that they would be needed in case worse came to worse and they had to make their sale.

He then returned to the shore, finding the boat ready.

It was a substantial affair, and there was plenty of room for all.

It had been built at Dawson expressly for our Klondikers in the early spring.

"We've lost a lot of time," groaned the detective. "Of course they are a mile down the creek now."

"Of course we can't hope to come up with them," said Ned, "so it don't make much difference how far they're ahead. All we can do is to push on and take our chances."

And with this philosophical reflection they started down the creek.

Sunrise found them near to the mouth of El Dorado Creek where it entered the famous Bonanza Creek.

Of course nothing had been seen of the launch, nor did they expect it.

"What I'm hoping for is that they have gone into camp somewhere," said Edith. "If they'll only take their time about it, we may come up with them yet."

"My very thought!" cried Ned. "The very thing I was thinking of at this moment."

"And it's something worth considering," said the Unknown. "I think we had better hug the shore as close as possible. We stand just so much less chance of being seen."

They pulled in nearer the shore, and had hardly done so when they saw a boat with three men working up stream.

Ned gave them the hail, and they pulled in toward them.

"Hello! Did you pass a naphtha launch towing two boats?" shouted Ned.

"No, we didn't," replied one of the men. "Haven't seen anything of the sort."

"Strange," muttered the Unknown. "Hello! Haven't I seen you before?"

"Mebbe you have," said the man. "I've seen you."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I knew it. I arrested you once."

"You did. It was a mistake. You remember!"

"Remember doing it, yes, but don't remember where. I took you for my man."

"Can't you recollect now?" laughed the miner, who seemed to think it a great joke.

"Was it New York?"

"No."

"Boston?"

"Not much!"

"I have it! It was Havana."

"Nixy. You are off."

"Give me a moment. New Orleans?"

"Not on your life! I was never in New Orleans in mine."

"Time! Let me think. Buenos Ayres, South America."

"Worse and worse."

"Stop. Now I have it! It was Lima, Penn."

"You'll have to give up. I'll give you a pointer."

"Reckon you'll have to."

"You told me you were Detective Katterborn of Hamburg, Germany."

The Unknown laughed—something he seldom did.

Ned, Dick and Edith were laughing heartily already.

"You'll have to give it up, Zed," said Young Klondike. "Ask him where it was."

"Why, in Dawson, only a few months ago; one night at Terry Nolan's saloon."

"Right you are!" cried the detective, who had no recollection of the affair at all. "Glad to meet you again. What brings you up here?"

"We are making for Young Klondike's place to get a job."

"This is Young Klondike."

"Hello! We're in luck. Is there any show up there, boss?"

"I have all the men I want at present," replied Ned.

"You want me, boss, that's certain."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I know something that ought to be worth money to you."

"Tell it. If there is anything in it for me you shall be paid."

"I'll tell you alone. I don't care to talk it out."

"Speak right out. These are all my friends."

"Well then, there's a plot against you."

"I know that."

"The land sharks of Dawson are laying for you."

"I know that, too."

"Seems to me you know it all."

"Perhaps not. Go on."

"Do you know who the leader is?"

"One Manton Millard."

"Thunder! I ain't got much left to tell."

"Tell all there is," said the detective.

"Well, it's only this, gents. Them fellers have sworn to down Young Klondike. They meet every night at Nolan's. I thought I'd drop up and give you a pointer."

"For which I'm much obliged," said Ned. "You go on up to the mine. When I return I'll see that you are well paid for your good intentions."

"Couldn't you fix it now?"

"No, I couldn't. Let me ask you one question though; do you know one named Raymond Wild?"

The man broke out into a laugh.

"Why, Wild and Millard are the same person," he replied. "He's Millard on change and among the big bugs, and Wild to us boys."

"I thought so," chuckled the detective. "I knew it would prove to be that way."

After a little further conversation the two boats separated, one going up the creek and the other down.

"Spies?" said Dick.

"Of course," replied Ned.

"And yet you sent them to the mine."

"What can they find out? Nothing. They are safer there than anywhere else."

"You're wrong," said the detective. "They are not spies; they are just informers, ready to sell out to the highest bidder, and I'm certain that they must have passed Millard going down the creek."

"Oh, if we could only get ahead of them!" sighed Dick.

It seemed as if it came in answer, when Edith pointed toward the headland, which, just beyond, jutted out into the creek.

"What's that smoke?" she exclaimed.

"Someone burning out a claim," answered Dick.

"Not on your life!" cried the Unknown. "It's the enemy camped for breakfast. Keep close in under the shore—we may see our chance."

They pulled on as rapidly as possible.

It seemed rather hopeless, but Ned and Dick had been very lucky since they came to the Klondike.

Somehow, neither of the boys could get it out of their heads that fortune meant to favor them now.

As they drew near the point they suddenly heard a rifle crack and a flock of ducks rose.

"They are looking for their breakfast," said the Unknown. "Ye gods and little fishes, this is our chance!"

"What do you mean?" cried Edith. "When you speak in that positive way, Zed, there is always something in it."

"See that smoke?"

"Yes; of course."

"I mean the rifle smoke."

"I see that, too."

"It's inland a good quarter of a mile!" cried Ned.

"Right you are, Young Klondike, and that's what

I'm driving at. There's a pond there—hence the ducks. Those fellows have left their boats."

"Not unguarded probably."

"Who knows? Put me ashore. Dick, you come with me. Edith, you and Ned keep on your way. We'll make a land attack and a sea attack, and, by the Jumping Jeremiah, we'll gobble up the army at one gulp."

"Don't risk it," said Edith. "Let's all keep together whatever else we do."

But the Unknown was determined, and as he always had his way there was little further talk about it.

Ned and Dick pulled in shore.

Then Dick and the Unknown landed.

Shouldering their rifles they started over the hill in the direction of the smoke.

"We're going to do a stroke of business, Ned," said Edith.

"Do you feel that way, Edith?"

"I do."

"So do I."

"A few moments will tell the story."

"As soon as we are around the point we ought to know."

They pulled as fast as possible.

As they rounded the point a loud roaring noise burst upon their ears.

It sounded like water tumbling over rocks.

This, in fact, was just what it was.

One of the most dangerous rapids in Bonanza Creek lay just ahead of them.

It was known as the Roaring Bulls.

Here the water went tumbling over a mass of broken rock, and to make matters worse the stream was filled with big bowlders.

It took a cool head and a steady hand to guide a boat among the Roaring Bulls, but still there was water enough if one only knew where the channel lay.

Ned knew all about it, for he had passed the Roaring Bulls many times.

"That smoke is in the False Cove, that's where it is," he declared. "Look out now, Edith, we shall soon see."

They were almost around the point.

In a moment they had passed it and could see the fire.

It was built on the shore, and near it was the launch and the two boats.

The only person in sight was the girl, May Barker.

She seemed to be cooking something in an old iron pot, hung between three forked stakes driven into the ground.

"That's the girl!" cried Edith.

"You see her now. She betrayed me," replied Ned.

"Edith, I can't but believe that she meant for me to go alone into the cave."

"You'd have lost your life if you had. I wonder if she could have been so wicked?"

"She was put up to it by that man Millard."

"What's to be done?"

"We are going to capture our boats."

"And their launch?"

"Of course. Don't think that I mean to leave them the chance to follow us."

"She sees us!" cried Edith, as the girl suddenly turned away from her cooking and looked toward the boat.

She gave a slight scream and started off up the gulch between the two hills on the run.

Suddenly the rifle cracked again.

Another flock of ducks rose up between the hills.

The girl gave a shrill cry and rushed on out of sight.

At the same instant Dick and the Unknown came bounding down the hill.

"Heavens! We've got it all our own way if we are only quick!" cried Ned.

He and Edith pulled with all their strength.

The distance was short, and they reached the deserted camp almost at the same time as Dick and the Unknown.

"Hooray! We've captured the whole business and never a shot fired!" cried Dick.

"Take it easy!" said the Unknown. "That witch has gone to give the warning. Here's the gold all right, Young Klondike! Who's going to run the naphtha launch?"

"I don't know any more about it than a cat," said Ned.

"Same with me," said Dick, "but, by gracious, if there's another such thing to be had for money in Dawson I'm going to own it before we go back."

"That's all I want to know," chuckled the Unknown, jumping into the launch. "I can work a naphtha engine or any other kind of an engine. Away we go on the fly, let 'em catch us if they can."

All went into the launch and the Unknown started the engine going.

The two boats in tow were loaded down with the bags of gold concealed by old tarpaulins.

As they swung around into the stream, a loud shout was heard among the hills.

"The enemy!" cried the Unknown. "Give it to 'em, Edith! Let 'em have it, boys!"

Manton Millard, Barker and the others came running out of the gulch.

A yell of disgust was heard, and then up went the rifles and the shots began to fly.

"Now, Edith!" cried Ned.

He fired and missed.

Dick ditto.

Edith sent two shots.

One went right through Manton Millard's hat, and knocked it off his head.

The other took Barker in the right hand, and he dropped his rifle with a yell.

"Hit 'em again, Edith!" cried the Unknown. "Oh, what fools we were to leave that boat behind!"

Strange no one thought of it, but so it was.

Still there was little danger of being overtaken.

The naphtha launch was making splendid time down the creek.

Nothing daunted, Millard and the others got into the abandoned boat and prepared to follow.

There was no more firing.

The robbers had given it up, and it was not the style of Young Klondike's party to do much shooting unless necessity required it.

"You'll stop that launch, Young Klondike, or I'll have your life!" roared Millard.

"We'll stop her at Dawson City, judge!" Ned shouted back, making a speaking trumpet with his hands.

Just then the Unknown threw the tiller of the launch hard apart, and struck in between the big bull and the calf, as two of the bowlders were called.

A few moments later Millard did the same with his boat.

But he was just as clumsy with the boat as he had been with the launch.

Seized by the rushing current it was thrown against the big bull, and all in an instant was bottom upward in the stream.

"Save me!" yelled Millard. "By Heaven, I'm a lost man! I can't swim."

"Take a taste of your own medicine, my boy!" bawled back the Unknown.

The others were going to his rescue, last they saw of him.

There was no danger of the villain drowning.

Then the launch and its tow swung successfully around the little bull, passing beyond the rapids and out of sight of the wreck.

CHAPTER VI.

EDITH DOES DETECTIVE WORK.

It was not yet noon when the little launch and its precious tow steamed up alongside the levee at Dawson City.

"We'll stand by the gold until it is safely landed," said Ned, "but you had better go up to the Victoria Hotel, Edith."

"Not until we all go together," said Edith. "I'm determined in that."

"Do you need me, boys?" demanded the Unknown suddenly, as he ran his eye over the crowd of idlers, who had come down on the levee to see the landing of the gold.

"Not particularly," replied Ned. "Why do you ask?"

"I may see my man and have to go for him."

"Which means you have seen something already, and are going to do a little detective work."

The Unknown made no answer.

He was scanning the crowd attentively.

But Ned knew him well enough to feel sure that there had been some particular meaning to his remark.

Now it is perfectly safe to make a landing of gold on the levee at Dawson City at any time.

The mounted Canadian police are always on the watch.

Such landings are being made daily.

Any one attempting robbery would have been immediately set upon by the crowd and promptly turned over to the police.

"It's Young Klondike! It is Young Klondike!" they cried, as Ned helped Edith to step ashore.

"Here I am again, boys," answered Ned, good-humoredly.

"What luck this time!" shouted a white-bearded miner. "Do you bring it down by the double boat load now?"

"That's what!" replied Ned. "We want a cart to take it up to the bank."

There were three carts coming, but before either of them arrived a man pushed his way among the crowd.

"Where did you get that launch?" he demanded. "That belongs to Mr. Millard."

"Borrowed it of Millard," replied Ned coolly.

"I can't believe you! That launch was stolen!"

A murmur went through the crowd, but before Ned could reply the Unknown suddenly sprang forward.

"My man!" he shouted, seizing the fellow by the collar. "At last I've got you! I arrest you in the name of the law!"

"What in thunder do you mean, you lunatic?" gasped the man. The Unknown struck him so violently that his hat flew off the back of his head.

"Hold on! Give him a show!"

"Don't choke him!"

"What's he done?"

"Who are you?"

These and similar remarks went up from the crowd.

Immediately the Unknown pulled off his plug hat, and made the astonished man a profound bow.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, a thousand times," he said, mockingly. "I thought you were my man, but I was mistaken. Good-day, gentlemen! I see my man now."

He made a bolt through the crowd and vanished.

But the man had slunk away while the Unknown was speaking.

By this time the crowd was in a roar.

Many knew the "crazy detective," as they called him, who always came with Young Klondike.

They thought it all a good joke.

But many recognized the launch and said as much to Ned.

"Millard will explain when he comes," Ned answered, quietly. "He was up to my place and we borrowed the launch to tow down this gold."

By this time the carts had come.

Ned hired one of them and walked with Edith on one side while Dick went on the other, the crowd following them to the very door of the bank.

Here the gold was deposited to the account of Golden & Luckey, and Edith and the boys went to the Victoria Hotel where they were well known.

"That was well done," exclaimed Ned, when they met in the parlor a little later. "See how nice it all turned out. How much better than if we had kicked up a big excitement among our men."

"That's what's the matter," said Dick, "but where in the world is the Unknown?"

"You tell me and I'll tell you. Who can follow him in his mad dashes. He'll turn up all right, fast enough."

"And you may be very sure he's working for our interests," said Edith. "He wouldn't be Zed if he wasn't doing that!"

Just then a waiter entered the parlor bringing a letter.

It was addressed to Mr. Ned Golden, Victoria Hotel.

At first Ned thought of the Unknown, but the handwriting was not his.

Ned hastened to open the letter and read as follows:

"MR. GOLDEN: Dear sir:—I understand you are in town, and would suggest that you call on me as soon as possible. Having had no answer to my letter I shall at once bring action against you, if you pay no attention to this note. My office is No. 266 Princess street. I shall be there until five o'clock. Yours,

"MANTON MILLARD."

"Don't you go, Ned," said Edith, emphatically. "At least don't go alone."

Ned laughed.

"Pshaw! Who's afraid!" he said. "I may as well know what this means. I don't believe it can be Millard at all. Their boat was all stove to pieces. How can they be here?"

"Perhaps our man was not Millard, after all," said Dick.

"But that fellow we met said he and Wild were the same person."

"He said he had seen nothing of the launch, too, and he must have known it was in the cove."

"It don't follow that he did. It's all a mystery, anyhow. I want to know what it means."

Edith still urged that no attention be paid to the note, but Ned would not listen.

The only compromise that he was willing to make was that Dick should go with him.

At a quarter before five they left the hotel.

"Do take care of yourselves, boys," said Edith. "I shall be worried every moment you are gone."

"Don't you dare to follow us," laughed Ned, shaking his finger. "Just as though we were not able to take care of ourselves."

Now, perhaps it was this remark that put the idea into Edith's head.

Whether or not this is so, certain it is that no sooner were they gone than Edith went straight to Ned's room.

Earlier in the afternoon the boys had visited one of the principal outfitting shops in Dawson, and bought two new suits each.

One was a working suit and the other a gentleman's suit.

Ned's clothes lay thrown over his bed.

Edith shut the door and locked it.

When she came out she carefully locked it again.

"Were you looking for Mr. Golden?" asked the chambermaid, who met her at the end of the corridor.

"I was," replied Edith.

"He's gone out with his partner."

"I found his door locked—I supposed so. Tell him I'll call again."

And the chambermaid passed on, while Edith ran down-stairs and went out by the bar-room door.

The drinkers at the bar no more suspected the good looking young fellow in the red shirt and loose coat than the chambermaid had done.

Several miners had called on Young Klondike since his arrival at the hotel, and it was the custom to go directly to a guest's room in the Victoria Hotel.

Meanwhile, Ned and Dick had gone down to Princess street.

It was now dark, but the streets were crowded with miners, prospectors and greenhorns, for there had been a steamer in from St. Michaels that afternoon, and all the new arrivals were anxious to see the town.

"It can't be Millard, Dick," remarked Ned, as they walked along.

"I don't see how it can," replied Dick. "That is unless the man who came up to our place was Wild."

"Confound these land sharks! I believe they'd go to any length to down us."

"Which we mustn't let them do, Ned. We've had wonderful luck so far, and if we can only run through this winter at the same rate we are going we can all go back to the States, and live in clover for the rest of our lives."

"It will be immense, won't it, Dick?"

"Don't talk. What's your plan when we get ready to pull out of here?"

"Oh, I mean to travel. I want to see the world."

"That will suit me right down to the ground. What's the matter with building a steam yacht, the very best that money can buy?"

"That's what I mean to have, you bet."

"We'll have a glorious old time and don't you forget it, but here we are at the number. Now then, be on your guard."

As they stopped and surveyed the building which bore the required number, a rough two story affair, Ned gave a start of surprise.

"What's the matter?" demanded Dick.

"Why, this is Terry Nolan's den!"

"Hang me if it ain't! I never noticed!"

"The very place that man in the boat said was the hold-out of the land sharks."

"That's what it is. Shall we give it up and go back?"

"I hate to do that. Let's see if Manton Millard has his name up—yes, here it is!"

There were several little tin signs nailed against the

side entrance which led to the upper floor of the saloon.

The floor seemed to be devoted to offices.

Manton Millard's name was painted on one of the signs, and the words "Claim Agent" were attached.

"A regular professional," said Dick.

"Of the worst type," answered Ned. "We ought not to pay any attention to him, perhaps, but still I feel a curiosity to know what this all means."

Now curiosity is sometimes a very troublesome thing.

It was destined to lead the firm of Golden & Luckey into a lot of trouble that night.

They ascended the stairs and knocked on the door which bore the duplicate of the sign below.

"Come in!" called a voice inside.

Ned opened the door and they walked into a dimly-lighted room, furnished with a cheap desk, a table and a few chairs.

A man sat writing at the desk.

As he laid down his pen and turned toward them, the boys were amazed to see that it was the man whom they had last seen struggling in the water at the Roaring Bulls.

"Ha, Young Klondike, so you came!" he sneered. "I fancy you didn't expect to see me here."

Ned caught his breath, but displayed his agitation in no other way as he answered:

"Well, no! Can't say I did."

"Cool!"

"Oh, no. I'm warm enough. Did you want to see me?"

"Yes; alone."

"I never travel alone. This is my partner, Dick Luckey. I have no secrets from him."

"Then I shall talk business plump and plain. Sit down."

"Thank you, I prefer to stand."

"As you will. That was a blame smart trick you played us this morning."

"Nothing to the trick you played me last night."

"What have you done with my launch?"

"It's down off the levee. You can have it any time."

"Thank you for nothing. Do you propose making a report of that little affair?"

"That depends."

"You'd better not."

"Why?"

"'Twon't be healthy. You got the best of me in that deal, but I'm a bad man to rile. As it was, you came mighty near putting a finish to my career."

"I guess I didn't upset you on the Roaring Bulls."

"No; but you were the cause of it. It would have been better if you had let us get off with the gold, but that ain't what I referred to, young man."

"What do you mean?"

"See that big bunch on my left shoulder?"

"Yes."

"That's a bandage. I owe that to you, Young Klon-

dike, and I'm the sort of a man who always pays his debts."

"How do you owe it to me?"

"Who shot me in Cal Remington's cave?"

"Ah! you got one of those balls, did you?"

"I did!"

"It may have been mine, and it may not; all I can say is I hope it was."

"Thank you! I suppose you think it is going to pay you to defy me. Perhaps you'll find out your mistake before you get through."

"I'm here to be instructed. This is my first and last interview, Mr. Manton Millard, or Raymond Wild—whichever name yours may really be."

"Ha! Someone has been talking. Who told you my name was Raymond Wild?"

"It don't matter."

"Probably it don't. Probably you ain't wondering how I happen to be here when you left me and my whole party drowning on the Roaring Bulls."

"I ain't asking any questions."

"But I'll tell you just the same. The down steamer happened to come along about an hour after you left. It found us sitting on the Bulls waiting for someone to take us off, and so they took us off and we came right through to Dawson—we were not more than half an hour behind you, Young Klondike. I trust your curiosity is gratified now."

"I am not aware that I expressed any curiosity, but all this is of no interest to me. You sent for me, and I am here. Tell me what you want to see me for and let me go."

"Let's go now," said Dick. "I see no use in talking to this man. The best thing we can do is to report this business to the Northwestern police."

Now this was certainly a very impudent speech on Dick's part, and might have got him into very serious trouble, but it seemed to have no other effect than to make Mr. Manton Millard burst out in a loud laugh.

Strange to say this threw Ned off his balance more than all his cool sarcasm had done.

"Come, come, I don't propose to stay here and waste my time in such nonsense as this!" he cried. "Say your say and let us get out. We've got plenty to do."

"Go—go, now! Why don't you go?" chuckled the land shark, lying back in his chair.

"Why don't you come to the point and say what you've got to say? Are you the man who wrote me that letter about my claim the other day?"

"Oh, go! Don't bother me; go! Ha! Ha! Ha!" replied Millard, continuing to laugh.

Ned did not know what to make of him.

Dick, disgusted, started for the door.

But when he tried to open it he found that it wouldn't open. It was as though an iron hand held the door on the outside—the knob would not turn.

"Prisoners!" gasped Dick.

"Of course. What did I bring you here for? Oliver, come here!"

A short man with a big bushy beard and glittering eyes, stepped out from the adjoining room.

"Take down all these gentlemen say, Oliver," said Millard, with strained politeness. "Be very particular, Oliver. I've had my little play with them and I'm going to talk business now."

The man pulled out a pad and a pencil and stood ready.

If Ned was afraid he did not show it; and Dick, now he once realized that they had been caught in a trap, was also perfectly cool.

"I'm glad you have got down to business at last," said Ned. "Perhaps you'll tell me now what you expect to make out of me?"

"Precisely what I'm going to do. I want your great claim on El Dorado Creek."

"And do you really expect me to turn my claim over to you?"

"Precisely. I wrote you that you had no right to it."

"Your letter ain't sufficient proof of that."

"It ain't, eh? It is good enough for me, and what's good enough for me is good enough for you, Young Klondike. Here's the transfer. I'll trouble you to sign it. That will end all differences between us for the present. As for the gold you stole from me, I'll call on you for an accounting on that score later on."

"I shall do nothing of the sort, of course. Open the door and let us out."

Ned flung his hand behind him.

But he was not quick enough.

Mr. Manton Millard was an older hand at revolver practice than Young Klondike, and he had Ned covered before the boy could draw.

"You want to shoot first and explain afterward in Dawson City, Young Klondike," he sneered; "now I've got you where I want you, and you two little snoozers will have to talk turkey or die!"

At the very instant the claim shark pronounced these words a young man, very strongly resembling Ned Golden, entered Terry Nolan's saloon.

Of course it was Edith, doing her detective work. She wore Young Klondike's clothes, and she had fixed herself up to look as much like Ned as possible, and really, she had succeeded very well.

All eyes were turned upon her as she walked into the place.

"That's Young Klondike," they whispered to each other; "that's the fellow who made a million on El Dorado Creek."

CHAPTER VII.

ESCAPE CUT OFF.

YOUNG KLONDIKE and Dick Luckey were in danger of their lives.

Manton Millard, the claim shark, was a very desperate man.

He was a thief and a gambler as well as a claim shark.

Actually he owned Terry Nolan's den, and so was complete master of the place and everybody connected with it.

Too lazy to exert himself, Manton Millard—or Raymond Wild, he went under both names but probably owned neither—preferred fleecing others out of their honest gains to engaging in honest work of his own.

"So this is your game?" said Ned, steadily. "You mean simple blackmail and nothing else."

"You can call it that if you like," sneered the claim shark. "Hand over them revolvers, boys!"

There was nothing else to do.

Ned looked at the man, Oliver; there seemed no hope in that quarter. Oliver stood with pad and pencil ready, but he never looked at the boys.

As soon as Millard got possession of their revolvers, he pocketed his own.

"Now we can talk!" he sneered. "Young Klondike, tell me all about your acquaintance with Cal Remington. I want to know just how you got hold of that claim. Oliver, write down his words."

As Ned had nothing to conceal in the matter, he told his story, which was simple enough.

He had befriended Cal Remington, who was a harmless lunatic, and had bought the claim from him.

Attacked by a gang of thieves, he had defended his purchase. Remington appeared on the scene and was killed by an explosion of dynamite which he himself placed in the end of the cave where lay the wonderful deposit which had made the fortune of Golden & Luckey.

Ned had fulfilled the terms of the agreement to the letter. It required him to pay a certain sum of money to the hospital in Dawson City, and he did it.

"If Cal Remington ever owned that claim then we own it now," he wound up by saying, "and we propose to fight for our rights to the last."

"That's all I want to know," said Millard, pushing the paper on the table toward Ned. "Young Klondike, you will sign here for the firm."

"No. I won't."

"I say you will."

"Never!"

"Then look out for squalls. Stand over there against the wall."

Out came the revolver again.

The boys were forced to obey.

"Will you sign?" demanded Millard, pocketing the revolver.

"No," said Ned, stoutly.

"Once more! Will you sign?"

"No!"

"Last call! Will you sign?"

"No! No! No!"

"Oliver, do your work," said Millard.

The little man suddenly dropped his pad and pencil and pulled out two revolvers.

"Stand over there you blasted land shark!" he shouted. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, I've got the drop on you, now!"

"The Unknown!" gasped Ned.

Like lightning he made a rush for Millard and got him by the throat.

The Claim Agent struggled and tried to draw his revolver.

But Dick was just as quick as Ned.

In a twinkling he was behind him and had it out of his hip pocket.

"Put him against the wall, boy! Put him against the wall!" cried Oliver.

They hustled him against the wall into the position they had occupied a moment before.

Never lowering his weapon, Oliver pressed hard against a black spot near the mantel-piece.

Suddenly Mr. Manton Millard vanished.

A trap-door had fallen beneath his feet.

Instantly it shot back into place.

The enemy was gone. Young Klondike and his friends had the office all to themselves.

"Zed! Is it really you?" cried Ned.

"Look!" answered Oliver.

Off came the beard.

Then throwing open a little cupboard near the chimney, he pulled out a battered plug hat and clapped it on his head.

"Is it the Unknown, or isn't it the Unknown?" he cried. "Ye gods and little fishes, did you think I was going to let you boys drop down into that hole if I could help it? Not much."

"Just like you, Zed!" cried Ned, warmly. "You saw that scoundrel when you bolted on the levee."

"No, sir! I was off to find where his hang-out was, and all about him. Didn't I do well? I made him hire me! Ye gods and little fishes! It was part of the bargain that you should be killed, and I was to raise a gang to go up and take possession of our claim. But enough of this, boys. Here we are and we've got to get out. First of all lets take hold of this."

He seized the paper on the table and hastily examined it.

"A quit claim deed of all Golden & Luckey hold in El Dorado Creek," he cried. "Here goes! He'll have to make out a new one now."

He tore it into a dozen pieces and flung them in the grate.

"Now, then, to open that door," he cried. "We'll break it down if we can't do anything else."

But the door resisted all their efforts.

The windows were also as firm as rocks, and even if they had succeeded in opening them it would have done no good, for there were iron bars outside and heavy shutters beyond the bars.

"This won't do," exclaimed the Unknown. "This is a den. First thing we know we'll be dropping into another trap. Hello! What's this?"

On the other side of the chimney was another black button set in the wall, just like the one which controlled the spring of the trap.

Taking all the chances of suddenly vanishing, the Unknown pressed this button.

Instantly a panel in the wall moved aside, and there was a narrow stairway in between the wall of the room and the outer wall of the house.

"That's the talk!" cried Dick. "Bully for you, Zed!"

"Where does it lead to?" exclaimed Ned.

"Blamed if I'll ever tell you," replied the detective, "but we'll soon find out. Ye gods and little fishes! if there's any way of flying this old coop we're going to find it! Come on!"

The Unknown pulled out a new dark lantern, already lighted and started down the stairs.

"Thought I might need it, so I bought it before I came in here," he explained.

Down they went—down—down—down! It seemed as if they would never come to the end of the stairs.

When at last they did end, there they were up against a door as firm as a rock.

"Escape cut off!" breathed Ned.

"You bet," whispered the detective. "Listen, Young Klondike! There's somebody coming down the stairs."

Here was a serious situation.

They could neither advance nor retreat.

In order that they may make what followed plain, we shall have to leave them there at the foot of the stairs for a moment, and follow Mr. Manton Millard when he took his tumble through the trap door in the floor.

Perhaps the land shark would have made some resistance if he had not known just where he was going.

There was danger from the Unknown's revolver and his own, then in the hands of his enemies, so the land shark preferred to take a tumble and land on the feather bed, which he knew lay below.

He sprang up, using language which would not look well in print.

Groping his way through the darkness, he came against a partition and fumbled about.

All at once a bell was heard ringing in the distance.

Then the Claim Agent stood still and waited.

He knew what that meant.

Help would be along in a moment.

It came.

Suddenly a door in the partition opened, and red-headed Terry Nolan appeared.

He held a lantern which he flashed into the hole.

"Howly saints! Is it you, boss?" he gasped.

"That's what it is! I've been tricked, sold, sucked in!" growled the land shark, stepping out into the cellar underneath Terry's den.

"Sure an' I thought there was something wrong when Young Klondike came into my place."

"Young Klondike in your place—nonsense! He's up-stairs in the office and I'm down here."

"Faith, an' he is, then!"

"You are deceived."

"Mebbe it's you."

"Show me the man."

"Troth, an' he's nothing but a boy."

"Show me the boy! They may have got out, but I don't believe it. They are safe there until I choose to let them go, which will be never! Burn that detective! I'll have my revenge on him if I swing for it—that's what I will!"

"Will you come with me first, or will you go for revenge now?" asked Terry.

"Come with you," said Millard, quickly. "I can trust them where they are for a few moments. Anyhow, they can't get beyond the foot of the secret stairs."

Terry hurried the land shark into the saloon, pointing out a young man seated at one of the tables who certainly did look like Young Klondike.

It was Edith, of course.

She was patiently waiting for developments.

Edith had tried the door leading up to the offices, and finding it locked went into the saloon.

Her hope was that sooner or later Ned and Dick would come in there.

As Manton Millard came up, Edith instantly recognized him as the man she had seen on the Roaring Bulls.

He was alone, and dropping into the chair opposite, looked across the table at her, saying in a whisper:

"Young feller, what's your name?"

"Bob Thomas," replied Edith promptly.

"Great guns! How much you look like a feller I know!"

"Who is that?"

"Ever hear of Young Klondike?"

"Oh, that's an old chestnut. I've been taken for him before."

Millard laughed heartily.

He seemed very friendly.

Fact is, an idea had occurred to him.

He thought he saw a way out of his difficulty which would make it plain sailing to get hold of Ned's claim.

He chatted with Edith a little further.

"You're a new-comer in Dawson, ain't you?" he asked.

"I came in a few weeks ago—yes," replied Edith, feeling that her chance to do detective work had come.

"Struck anything yet?"

"No."

"Going up to the diggings?"

"Yes, if I get the chance."

"That means that you haven't much money?"

"It means I have none at all and want to make some."

"Just so. Say, how particular are you as to the way you make your money?"

"Not very. I'm out for the stuff every time."

"You're the sort I want, young feller."

"I could tell better about that if I knew your name."

"Which you shall later on. Want to go to work for me?"

"If the pay is good."

"You'll get your pay in a lump. It will be ten thousand dollars in dust if the job succeeds, and nothing at all if it don't."

"That suits me right down to the ground, but I would like to know what I'm going to do."

"I'll tell you in a few words. You are to personate this fellow, Young Klondike, and sign his name to a few little documents, and then swear to it before the claim recorder and before the bank teller, and a few little things like that."

"Forgery—perjury! That's good!"

"Big pay, though."

"I don't think so."

"Name your price."

"Fifty thousand dollars—Young Klondike is said to be worth a million."

"It's a big raise, but I'll go you. Fifty thousand it is."

"I'm agreeable, but where will Young Klondike be all this time?"

Millard laughed and twisted his mustache.

"Oh, Young Klondike will be dead," he answered.

"That's where Young Klondike will be."

Edith took it coolly.

She did not even shudder.

"Ned and Dick are in the power of this villain," she thought. "Their lives may depend upon me."

"It's a go," she said, lightly. "Tell me what to do and I'll do it."

This remark was made at the very moment when Ned and Dick, with the Unknown, found their escape cut off at the foot of the secret stairs.

"Meet me here to-morrow morning, Bob," said Millard. "Say about nine o'clock."

"I'll be on hand," replied Edith, and she hurriedly left the saloon.

This was a different turn from what she had expected.

"The police must be notified at once," she thought. "He means to kill them. I'll do it now."

But she didn't. Why, the next chapter will explain, but before we end this we may as well add that Manton Millard, calling Terry Nolan and two other tough characters, hurried down into the secret compartment in the cellar.

Seizing a rope, Millard pulled down the trap.

"We'll do them now, boys," he said. "I have no further use for Young Klondike. We'll do them up and chuck their bodies into the Yukon."

They all stepped on to the trap, and in an instant shot up into the office.

Each man held his revolver ready, and it would have been bad for Young Klondike and his friends if they had been in the office then.

But they were not there.

The office was deserted.

"They are on the stairs!" cried the land shark. "Trapped! We can shoot 'em on the fly without ever showing ourselves at all."

He pressed the button and the panel flew open.

Followed by his toughs, Manton Millard ran down the secret stairs. But the birds had flown. The stairs were deserted, and the door at the end still tight shut.

CHAPTER VIII.

EDITH PLAYS A BOLD GAME.

"PREPARE to shoot, boys! We're in a hole, and have got to get out of it!" breathed the Unknown.

They drew their revolvers and stood ready.

Of course, the detective had shut off his lantern.

Heavy footsteps could be heard descending the stairs in the dark.

"Let them pass us! Let them pass us if they will!" whispered Ned.

He knew now that these were not their enemies, for a voice had spoken in the darkness:

"Keep tight hold of my coat-tail, Bill," it said.

"I'll lead you out of here all right! Gee whiz! If Terry knew I was using the secret stairs he'd kill me, but it is better than staying behind to fight."

They were the gamblers from Terry Nolan's upstairs faro room.

They had just swindled a poor miner out of the last ounce of his dust and were now making their escape.

"They'll open the door and we'll slip out after them," thought Ned.

Dick and the Unknown grasped the situation too, and thought the same.

But all stood ready to defend themselves in case worse came to worse.

Nearer and nearer they came.

Young Klondike and his friends flattened themselves against the wall.

"Where in thunder do these stairs end?" they heard another voice ask.

"Right here, Bill. I'll open the door. Ha! What the blazes——"

"Drop! Drop, or you're a dead man!" hissed the Unknown.

The foremost man had run against him in the dark.

Instantly the Unknown had him by the throat.

Ned threw himself on the other man, and pinned him against the wall with an iron grip.

"Open that door and let us out, and we'll cry quits!" said the Unknown. "We only want to escape from this place—that's all."

"I'll do it if you let up on me!" gasped the man.

"Throw up your hands! Dick, take him! Remember, gentlemen, we've got you covered. You may stick one of us, but by the Jumping Jeremiah, it will be your last sticking if you do."

"I'll open the door! I'll open the door if you'll only give us a show," said the man.

Dick held on tight, and the Unknown flashed his lantern on the two toughs.

They were ugly-looking customers, but neither had

drawn revolver or knife. The Unknown felt perfectly safe now.

"Who in thunder are you, anyhow?" demanded Dick's man, surlily.

"None of your business—open that door!" retorted the Unknown.

"You'll not shoot if I put down my hands?"

"Not unless you try to draw on me."

"Make this feller let go of me, and I'll open the door."

"Let go, Dick," said the detective. "Ned, you can let up on your man, too, but keep 'em covered, boys."

Dick's man, as soon as he was free, touched a secret spring, and the door flew open.

To Ned's intense relief, he saw that the alley running behind Terry Nolan's den lay on the other side of the door.

"Can we go now?" demanded the man.

"Skip! Mizzle! Get out!" chuckled the Unknown.

The two men darted down the alley and disappeared.

"That's the talk! Coast all clear now," said the Unknown.

They slipped out into the alley, the door closing after them of its own accord.

"Good-by to the land sharks of Dawson City," chuckled the Unknown. "Young Klondike, you and Dick are a pair of fools if you ever get into their clutches again."

They hurried round on to Princess street.

As they came in sight of Terry Nolan's door, a young man stepped hastily into the street.

He made a curious gesture as he caught sight of them, and ran off in the other direction as fast as he could go.

"Your double, Ned!" cried Dick. "Great Scott! did you see how much that chap looked like you?"

Ned hadn't noticed, but the Unknown had; they were too much interested in getting out of the way themselves to give chase and seek to solve the mystery, so they hurried back to the Victoria and were glad enough when they got inside the doors.

"A narrow escape," said the Unknown when they found themselves in the parlor. "Boys, you'd have surely been murdered if I hadn't headed you off."

"I'll report this to the police!" cried Ned. "It is scandalous that such things can occur. Don't think I'm not grateful to you, Zed. I realize well enough that we owe our lives to you."

"Of course we do," said Dick. "I shall never forget this night."

"Oh, I ain't fishing for thanks," said the Unknown. "It ain't that at all. I only want you to fully realize the great risks you have run."

"Which we do," said Ned. "I'll get square with that fellow Millard. I'll fix him, so that he won't be able to play anybody else this trick."

"Now, now! You'll do nothing of the sort," broke in the Unknown. "Don't think of going to the police."

Go right about your business as though nothing had occurred, and leave the fellow to me."

"Our first business now is to see Edith and let her know that we've got back all right," said Ned.

He rang the bell and told the servant to send word to Miss Welton that she was wanted in the parlor.

Edith came running down-stairs in a moment.

"Back again, boys," she said, laughingly. "Well, what did you make of Mr. Millard? Zed, did you find your man?"

"Yes, I did, but he got away from me—got the drop on me, so to speak," chuckled the detective before the boys could reply.

"Millard's a scoundrel of the first water," flashed Ned.

"That's no news," said Edith. "You knew that before you went there. Tell us all about what happened. I'm just dying to know."

Now, considering Edith's dying condition, she did not seem to get very much excited over the strange adventures the boys had to relate.

Still Edith was always cool and they thought nothing of it, but Ned was treated to a surprise when he and Dick went up to their room.

"Thunder! Someone has been wearing my new clothes!" he exclaimed, the moment he entered the room.

Here was a mystery which gave the boys something to talk about until they went to sleep.

Next morning the Unknown was missing at breakfast, and when Ned and Dick came in at noon after having spent the morning attending to various matters of business, Edith was missing, too.

She had left the hotel immediately after breakfast without saying where she was going, the housekeeper explained.

Ned didn't like it and felt decidedly uneasy.

"Probably she has found some friend," said Dick. "She'll turn up all right this evening, no doubt."

"I think I'll put on my new clothes and go down to the Mining Exchange and arrange for the sale of those other claims," said Ned, after dinner. "I suppose you agree with me that we can't do better than to sell them, Dick?"

"That's my idea," said Dick, "that is, if we can get anybody to buy them as things stand."

"We'll sell them on their merits. You know what the claim recorder said?"

"That Millard was a shark and he didn't believe that any such person as Barnard J. Rice exists."

"Exactly."

"Oh, that's all very well, Ned, but he admitted he didn't know anything about it. Don't forget that."

"I don't forget it. We'll sell the claims on their merits. The more people we get interested in this matter the easier it will be to fight Millard."

"When do you propose having the sale?"

"To-morrow, if possible. The sooner the better. I want to see the end of this business and get back to work."

The boys went up to their room, Ned intending to change his clothes.

Then came the second edition of the mystery of the night before.

"Great Scott! Someone has stolen my clothes this time!" cried Ned, as he opened the closet where they were supposed to be hanging.

And yet he had locked the door when they went out.

Here was a second edition of the clothes mystery, and one not to be solved by the boys that day.

Ned had to go to the Mining Exchange in his old clothes.

It was his first visit there, and his entrance created a great furor.

"It's Young Klondike! It's Young Klondike!" the miners and claim agents said to each other.

They did not wait to be introduced to the King of El Dorado Creek, as Ned was sometimes called.

They flocked around him and introduced themselves.

Everybody wanted to know Young Klondike, it seemed.

Now, the Mining Exchange in Dawson City is no elegant structure like those of San Francisco and New York.

It is just a room behind one of the principal stores, rough boarded, with benches along the walls for seats and a bar at the back where the traders could liquor up whenever they felt disposed.

Still, many fairly large deals were consummated here.

Stocks didn't go for much, for there were few companies in the Klondike country then.

Claims were bought and sold outright, and very often large quantities of gold were exchanged for lumber, provisions, dry goods and other things.

The Exchange floor was free to all, but no one but a member was permitted to buy or sell.

This gave some little chance for brokers, but there were very few who made use of this privilege; principals generally made the deals, and cases of dispute were settled in short order.

Sales were generally made with revolvers ready for instant use, and woe betide the man who went back on his bid.

"What are you going to do with all that land of yours up the creek, Young Klondike?" asked Mr. Berry, one of the richest of the claim owners.

"Sell a part of it and work the rest," Ned promptly replied.

"You'll find it hard to do that," said Berry, half sneeringly. "You know there's been a big lot of talk about your claim."

"I didn't know," said Ned. "I haven't been in Dawson for some time."

"Well, it's a fact."

"What do they say?"

"That you are not the rightful owner."

"I claim that I am."

"You'd have to prove it."

"Manton Millard is the man who started that story."

"I don't know who started it. But I do know that Millard is one of the worst land sharks in Dawson City. I wouldn't believe anything he said."

"Then there you are. You follow those stories back to their source and you'll find they all started with Millard."

"If that is really the case they don't go for much."

"I propose to find out just how much they do go for," said Ned, quietly.

"How?"

"By selling three claims on my land, if I can be allowed the privilege of the Exchange."

"We can fix that all right," replied Berry, "but I doubt if you have any bidders. That's the way I feel."

"I'm going to sell them subject to the doubt. My claim on El Dorado has paid big money, Mr. Berry."

"So I've heard, but then we hear a lot."

"You are at liberty to inquire about the standing of Golden & Luckey at the bank."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, sir. Every time."

"And will Golden & Luckey guarantee the title to these claims?"

"Golden & Luckey will guarantee the purchase money," said Ned, who had thought the matter all out, "but the guarantee will be with the proviso that they do not have to pay back the money until the matter is finally settled, and that the purchasers join in defending any suit which may be brought, bearing their share of the expense."

"That's fair. Still a man don't like to invest in a doubtful claim."

"Not when it's up against one that has paid a million? I don't agree with you."

"Young man, you're getting rather sharp for a beginner."

"I cut my eye teeth before I came to the Klondike. I wasn't born yesterday, nor the day before."

Now quite a crowd had gathered around Ned when he began talking.

They all knew that Berry was trying to bluff the boy, for as a matter of fact these men in the Dawson City Exchange knew more about this El Dorado business than Ned did himself.

But many were the friends and tools of Millard.

"Give him a show!" they cried. "Let him put up his claims and see what will come of it."

"I've no objection," said Berry. "By all means give the boys a show."

Accordingly, after some discussion, the time of the sale was fixed for noon next day.

This was all Ned wanted.

He hurried out, and visiting the printing office had some handbills struck off to that effect.

These he and Dick personally distributed all over town, leaving them in every saloon and hotel.

This done they returned to the Victoria.

The first person they met on their way to their room was Edith. She was just coming down the stairs.

"Where in the world have you been?" cried Ned.

"Fishing," replied Edith, with a smile.

"Fishing! In the Yukon?"

Edith laughed.

"Not exactly, Ned."

"What did you catch?"

"Nothing. I was fishing for sharks."

"Edith, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say. If you are too dull to understand, you'll have to go without knowing until later."

And Edith, still laughing, ran on down-stairs.

Ned was puzzled, but he was more puzzled still when he entered his room.

There were his new clothes hanging where he had left them. Evidently they had been worn again.

CHAPTER IX.

THE AUCTION SALE.

"ZED, you are a detective. I want your help," said Ned, at the breakfast table next morning, for the Unknown had turned up again.

Where he had been he did not state, and the boys knew that it would be no use to ask.

"What do you want of me, dear boy?" he asked, as he stirred his coffee. "This is going to be an off day with me. I'm willing to work for you."

"Someone has been wearing my new clothes. Twice they've been taken out of my room and put back again. I don't like it for a cent."

The Unknown threw back his head and gave one of his tremendous laughs.

Edith looked interested and said it was a shame.

"It makes me tired," said Ned. "I've spoken about it at the office, but don't get the least satisfaction. They say I must look after my own things."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Watch the room while Dick and I go out to arrange about the auction."

"Can't do it. I suggest that you give the key to Edith. She's reliable. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"It's no joke," said Ned, rather vexed.

"Why don't you put on the clothes and leave your old ones?"

"I want to catch the fellow. I thought I'd give him another chance."

"Give the key to Edith. She won't go to the auction, of course."

"Can't, I suppose. They don't allow ladies in the Exchange."

"But you want me there?"

"Of course we do."

"Depend upon it Millard will spring some trick on you."

"I'm sure he will," said Edith. "Ned, you will be careful, won't you?"

"Well, of course."

"Don't you fret," said Dick. "My revolver will never go out of my hand."

"Same here," said the Unknown. "Every move that crowd makes will be watched with my watch eye, which—"

"Don't say which never sleeps," laughed Dick. "Don't forget the cave."

"Called down!" said the Unknown. "I'm dumb. But mark this, my watch eye won't be asleep to-day."

It wound up in Ned's giving the key to Edith, who promised to keep an eye on the room.

As soon as Ned and Dick went out, leaving their companions still at the table, the Unknown burst into a laugh which made the very dishes rattle.

But Edith did not even smile.

"You're making lots of noise, Zed," she quietly remarked; "what's it all about?"

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, Edith, you're a cool one!"

"What do you mean?"

"There now, there now! You do it well! When I was in Melbourne, Australia, in '84, I knew a girl detective, no older than you, who was as sharp as—"

"That will do. Never mind the story. Don't you think I'm a good person to take charge of the key?"

"Bully! You may want to get into that closet. I'll bet a hat Ned's new clothes are gone when he comes back again."

"I see you are on to my scheme, Zed."

"No, I ain't. I don't want your confidence, Edith, but you are playing a bold game, my dear. Better have left that business for the Unknown."

"What do you know?"

"Who met Millard at Terry Nolan's yesterday morning? Who spent an hour talking to that murdering Claim Agent in his office, that's riddled with man traps from floor to ceiling? Edith, I admire you!"

Edith took it all with perfect coolness.

That was her way.

Whatever the brave little California lady set out to do she did, and nobody could turn her from her purpose, nor make her talk if she wanted to hold her tongue.

"Where were you all that time, Zed?" she calmly asked.

"Watching outside part of the time. Standing near your chair part of the time."

"Near my chair?"

"Yes, ma'am!"

"I don't believe it."

"Remember the old man from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, who came in to buy a claim?"

"That never was you!"

"Oh, yes it was, Edith! I wanted to see what you were up to. I was old Oshkosh! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"What I'm up to is fighting the land sharks of

Dawson City, and I'm going to down them!" breathed Edith across the table.

"All a mistake, my dear! The detective business is like every other business; it has to be learned. Mark my words, Edith, you would have done better to have taken me into your confidence. You can't down Mr. Manton Millard as easy as you think."

But Edith only laughed.

At half past eleven Ned came back to the hotel.

He ran up to his room—the door was locked.

"Hello!" called the Unknown, coming out of the next room. "After your clothes, dear boy?"

"That's what! Where's Edith?"

"Off again, dear knows where. She left the key with me. The clothes were all right half an hour ago. I saw them in the closet myself."

Perhaps he did, but they were not there now.

Ned was wild.

The Unknown expatiated on the deep mystery, his face as straight as a deacon's all the while.

What might have been done if there had been time to do anything we cannot say, for there was no time. The sale was to come off at twelve o'clock.

"I'll find out what this means if I have to turn the hotel inside out to do it," declared Ned; "but we can't stop now. Zed, we must get right up to the Exchange."

When they arrived there they found a great crowd assembled, all anxiously awaiting the appearance of the famous Young Klondike, the boy gold king of El Dorado Creek.

There were miners, old and young, rough men and polished men, greenhorns and old timers; even two Indians had strolled in to see what was going on.

But Ned did not fail to remark the absence of Mr. Berry and all the more responsible of the Exchange members.

It annoyed him greatly.

He wondered what the reason could be.

He had yet to learn that the land sharks of Dawson City had a bigger pull than was generally supposed.

While the Exchange members did not actually back them up in their swindles, they did not interfere with them, for the reason that many bona fide claims were sold by these men.

Everyone knew that the Claim Agents had sworn to down Young Klondike, and the Exchange men, in a meeting held the previous afternoon, had decided that it would not pay them to interfere.

"Shall we go ahead with the sale or shall we wait?" whispered Dick when Ned came in. "None of the big bugs are here."

"Go ahead by all means," said Ned. "They know the sale is down for twelve o'clock. If they ain't here it's because they don't want to come. We can't force them to bid."

"That's what's the matter," said the Unknown.

"Go right ahead."

Now it was the custom for every man to be his own auctioneer in the Dawson City Exchange.

Ned had the long table placed in front of the bar,

and on this he spread out the nuggets taken from the three claims he meant to sell.

The piles were designated by tickets 1, 2, 3, and Ned had quit claim deeds signed by himself for the firm all ready.

As the miners crowded round the table and began examining the specimens, Ned got out his deeds and began to talk.

The Unknown drew his revolver and seated himself on the other side of the table grimly watching the crowd, while Dick took his place at the end by Ned's side with his revolver cocked and ready behind his back.

"Gentlemen!" cried Ned, "the specimens which you see before you are from the Young Klondike Claim on El Dorado Creek! You are all familiar with this claim and are probably aware that it has already yielded over a million dollars in dust and nuggets, the latter running larger than any other claim on the creek.

"Gentlemen, my name is Golden, and this young man beside me is my partner, Mr. Luckey. We claim to be the owners of this land, but as our claim has been disputed I propose to tell you the history of our purchase so that you may all know just how the matter stands."

Then, in his clear ringing voice Ned told the story of Cal Remington and how Golden & Luckey came into possession of the claim.

He told of Manton Millard's attempt to oust them from their holding, but by the advice of the Unknown he made no allusion to the affair of Terry Nolan's.

Finally he wound up by stating that Golden & Luckey would personally guarantee the purchase money and would give every assistance to miners who cared to try their luck on the claims.

"Now then, gentlemen!" cried Ned, "remember that these nuggets are from prospect holes!"

"No one can tell what lies hidden underground, but we do know this, pay dirt has been struck on our claim nearer the surface than anywhere else on El Dorado Creek, and any one buying one of our outlying claims can be reasonably sure of finding the same thing. There you are, gentlemen! the sale will now begin."

"Suppose we buy, how long does your guarantee hold good?" asked a man wearing a fur cap, who stood with his hands in his pockets smoking a clay pipe.

"Holds good till the title is settled!" said Dick. "He told you that."

"I only wanted to be sure," said the man. "A feller don't like to buy a pig in a bag."

"How much am I offered for claim No. 1?" cried Young Klondike, stepping on the table.

Dick and the Unknown held their revolvers ready; a grizzled old miner held up his finger and bid five thousand dollars.

"Good for a starter!" cried Ned. "Now, gentlemen, I'll let you into a secret! I hold these claims at five thousand dollars, and nothing less would have

gone. Now, it's to the highest bidder! No rise less than one hundred dollars accepted. Five thousand dollars I'm offered! Who'll make it more?"

"Five thousand one hundred dollars!" called the man in the fur cap.

"Make it two hundred!" said a young man with a heavy mustache and a slouch hat, who had been intently examining the nuggets.

"I'll go five thousand five hundred dollars. I want that hole," said the old man with the beard.

"The claims are worth ten thousand dollars with a clear title, gentlemen!" cried Ned. "And we are going to have a clear title and don't you forget it! Five thousand five hundred dollars I'm offered! Who'll make it six thousand dollars?—fifty-five—sixty—fifty-five—sixty! Going at five thousand five hundred dollars—going! Going—"

"Five thousand six hundred dollars," said the young man with a mustache.

"Six thousand dollars!" called Graybeard, who seemed disposed to go by big jumps.

"Six thousand one hundred dollars!" bid the more cautious Mustache.

Then Mustache and Graybeard had it out between them and Claim No. 1 was run up to nine thousand one hundred dollars.

Graybeard got it, Mustache dropping out.

"What name?" asked Ned.

"Jones," said the purchaser.

Ned handed down the deed, and the money was paid over to Dick.

"I'll fill in your name as soon as the sale is over, sir," he said.

Then No. 2 was put up.

Mustache got this at six thousand one hundred dollars, the man with the clay pipe bidding against him.

"Can I have twenty-four hours to raise the money in?" asked a smooth-faced young man on the other side of the room.

"Certainly you can, if there is any chance of your getting it," replied Ned.

"I belong to a party which got in last night," said the young man. "We're from the State of Maine; there's six of us, but the crowd has scattered about town, and I shall have to wait till I can call a meeting."

"Are you empowered to act for them?" asked Ned.

"Yes, I am," replied the young man. "We've all heard of you, Young Klondike, and we'd like to locate near you. There won't be any trouble about raising the money. We'd rather take the claims on the title than to buy of the Claim Agents, where we would get a good title to a bad claim."

"That's business," cried Ned. "You shall have the time."

Then it was a fight between Clay Pipe and the Maine boy.

Clay Pipe did not seem to be able to get above six thousand one hundred dollars, and Smooth Face got the claim for six thousand two hundred dollars.

"That settles it, gentlemen!" cried Ned. "I'll

now fill up the transfers and write out the guarantees. You may rely upon it that our title to these claims is good."

"Don't you believe him!" said a voice at the door. "His title ain't worth a Continental. Whatever title Young Klondike ever had to those claims has already been sold to me!"

"That man is a fraud and a thief!" shouted Ned. Dick and the Unknown covered the speaker with their revolvers. "He's the man who tried to rob us! There he stands, gentlemen! His name is Manton Millard!"

CHAPTER X.

EDITH TURNS THE TABLES UPSIDE DOWN.

MANTON MILLARD stood in the doorway with a sarcastic smile on his face.

By his side were two other well known Claim Agents, members of the Exchange.

"Put up those shooting irons," called one—his name was Joe Butler. "There's no need of any muss here. We've just as good a right to sell these claims with our guarantee as Golden & Luckey have to sell them with theirs, and we can shoot as well as any men on the Klondike. Let all hands remember that."

All three drew revolvers and stood eying Ned and his friends.

"That's sensible talk!" called out the old miner who had bought No. 1. "Let every man have a show! We've bought these claims on a one-sided story, believing that story to be true. Now let's hear the other side of it, I say."

"So do I," said the man with the black mustache. "Don't let's have any muss."

"I'll vouch for my friend, Mr. Millard," said Joe Dutton. "He has been insulted here, and it is only because he is a quiet, sensible fellow, that he didn't blow that young man's head off. I say Young Klondike is a scoundrel if he has sold claims on this floor at auction, which only yesterday morning he sold at private sale."

"It's a lie!" cried Ned.

Millard flung up his revolver.

But Dick and the Unknown stood grimly covering him, and he dropped it again.

"I say it's the truth!" he hissed. "I can prove it. I hold the transfers right here."

It was really wonderful how cool Ned kept.

"Gentlemen," he called out, "that man robbed me of nearly a hundred thousand dollars, which I was fortunate enough to get back again. Let him deny it if he dares!"

"I do deny it! I took the gold in the interest of my client," retorted Millard. "It was you who stole it from me, and the law will compel you to make good

every dollar of it, and all you have dug out of your claim beside."

"Who says so?" demanded Ned.

"I say so!"

"And so do I," echoed Joe Dutton.

"Same here," added the third Claim Agent.

"We'll see about that," said Ned. "As to this latest yarn about my having sold out to you I utterly deny it. If you hold any proofs of such a transfer they are forged."

"What, what! Do you dare to deny that you came to me yesterday and sold out your entire interest, lock, stock and barrel, for fifty thousand dollars?" demanded Millard, with well assumed surprise.

"Pshaw!" cried Ned, jumping down off the table; "what's the use talking to fellows like you! As though you did not know that every word you utter is a lie."

"That's fighting talk, sure," sneered Millard, "but I'm not here for fight. I'm out here for business, and we'll do our fighting some other time. Now then, hold your tongue a minute if you can, Young Klondike, and let me say a word. My friend, Mr. Dutton, will now proceed to sell these three claims over again, but before we do it I wish to exhibit the transfers; here they are."

And Millard spread out three deeds upon the table, from which Ned had already stepped down.

Everybody crowded around to have a look, Ned and Dick among the rest.

The deeds bore the signature of Golden & Luckey, Ned purporting to have signed for the firm.

"Forgery!" cried Young Klondike.

"Not much, and you'll be arrested for swindling before you're an hour older!" cried Dutton, jumping up upon the table. "Gentlemen, how much am I offered for Claim No. 1. Clear title! No humbug! Guaranteed by Manton Millard. Guarantee endorsed by your humble servant. Gentlemen, these claims are well worth twenty thousand dollars of any man's money. Don't be afraid of those young bluffers and their revolvers! What Mr. Millard told you is the truth. I myself saw Young Klondike sign those papers."

There was a good deal of excitement then.

Black looks were thrown at the boys from all sides.

"Do you want the money down, or will you take it when you prove title?" called out the man with the gray beard.

"We'll take it when the claim recorder gives you a certificate," answered Dutton. "We don't want a cent of money down."

"Then I'll bid same price I paid before, and hold Golden & Luckey to their guarantee; they are perfectly good for it, I am told."

"It's a fraud and a swindle!" cried Ned. "I'm going for the police. I never signed those papers."

"He speaks the truth," said a girlish voice at the door. "I know it because I signed them myself!"

If a bombshell had been thrown upon the floor of

the Exchange it could hardly have caused greater excitement.

There stood Edith just inside the door, dressed in Ned's best suit.

The instant she appeared the Unknown sprang to her side, facing the crowd with his revolver.

Ned and Dick recognized her at first glance and followed his example.

But the others were puzzled at the resemblance between Edith as she was dressed and Ned, and it is safe to say that no one ever dreamed of her being a girl, so perfect was her disguise.

Manton Millard made a rush for the bar and dodged behind it.

The Claim Agent was a coward, and everyone saw it now.

Not so Joe Dutton.

Joe was a fighter.

He drew his revolver and fired down from his elevated position on the table.

The shot was a miss.

It was also a signal for a free fight all around.

The Unknown and Dick instantly jumped in and fired.

Millard peering from behind the bar fired at Edith and missed—it was missing all around.

"Capture the scoundrels! Don't let them escape!" shouted Ned, making a rush for the bar. "Help me, friends, and we'll soon clear the title to our claims!"

Everybody jumped in then.

Some took sides with the Claim Agents, some with Young Klondike.

All in a minute a free fight was on, but it was brought to a close in a most unexpected manner by Edith.

With the idea of giving Millard an alcohol bath Edith aimed at a small quarter cask of whisky, which stood on a shelf behind the bar.

Of course she hit it.

More than that. She put a hole in it.

The whisky spurting out struck the cigar lighter on the end of the bar and ignited.

Then all at once there was a burst of flame and the cask exploded, the pieces flying in every direction, while Millard, Joe Dutton, the bartender and others were showered with the burning spirit.

With yells of agony the Claim Agents sprang away from the bar.

There was no time to waste.

The floor, the shelves and even the table were burning.

The fight came to a sudden finish.

Edith had turned the tables upside down with a vengeance.

All made a rush for the door.

"Mizzle, boys!" whispered the Unknown. "Light right out and let them settle it among themselves. I've got reasons for what I say."

"No, no! Let's stay and face the music," said Ned.

"Ned, for my sake, go!" cried Edith. "I've been working for you—don't undo my work."

There was no resisting this appeal.

They pushed their way through the crowd, which came rushing out of the stores and houses and turned into a side street.

"The Exchange is a goner!" cried Dick. "The whole place is in a blaze."

"Let it burn!" said Edith. "We've got work to do."

"You bet!" said the Unknown. "If they start that steamer before we can get in ahead of them our fight with the land sharks has only begun."

"What do you mean?" cried Ned. "You two have been working your own way and leaving Dick and me in the dark. Well, well, Edith! You are a remarkable girl. I know now who stole my clothes."

"Yes, and don't they fit first rate? Don't I make a nice boy? I've a great mind to keep them altogether and dress the way all the ladies on the Klondike do."

Now, in saying this Edith was not quite correct.

All the ladies in the Klondike country do not wear men's clothes, but by far the greater part of them do when going from place to place, purely as a matter of convenience in traveling.

It was entirely a common thing then to see women so dressed walking the streets of Dawson City.

Even if Edith had not taken pains to make herself look like a boy, and it had been perfectly apparent that she was a girl, no one would have thought anything of it, and she would have attracted no attention on the street.

Meanwhile, the fire bell was ringing, and they could hear the shouts of the people behind them.

Looking back they could see the smoke and flames of the burning Exchange ascending heavenward.

It was perfectly apparent that Edith had done her work only too well.

"We'll all be nipped for this sure, if they can catch us," said the Unknown. "Edith, my dear, are you sure we can lay our hands on the launch?"

"Perfectly sure."

"What launch! What does it all mean? I must know!" demanded Ned.

"It means that Millard has engaged fifty toughs to go up Bonanza Creek in the Blackbird to clean out our mine."

"What!"

"Oh, it's a fact! Of course they can get no further with the Blackbird than the mouth of El Dorado Creek, but they calculate to do the rest of the distance on foot."

Further conversation was prevented, but they heard men running behind them.

They looked back, and saw quite a crowd coming their way.

The Unknown dodged around the corner, and all hands followed him.

Then by cutting through the lumber yard they were at the end of the levee in a moment.

There lay Manton Millard's naphtha launch with nobody near it.

Further down the levee was the little river steamer Blackbird.

The deck was crowded with men. They were singing and shouting, and several playing on banjos; all hands seemed to be half drunk.

It was a hard gang—the boys saw that at a glance.

"There you are!" said Edith. "That's the crowd that's going to clean us out! Gracious, won't there be a fight if they ever get there! Get aboard, boys! If Millard can steal our gold we ought to be able to steal his launch! We'll get the start of them, then let them catch us if they can."

They all hurried aboard the launch and the detective started the dainty little craft.

None too soon either.

The crowd were coming through the lumber yard.

Several of the mounted police were with them, while in the distance the Exchange could be seen burning fiercely.

"Hold on there, Young Klondike!" shouted one of the officers. "You're wanted! Hold on or we fire!"

"Not on your life!" roared the Unknown. "We are bound up El Dorado Creek, and up the creek we go!"

The mounted police flung up their rifles and a shower of shot flew toward them.

But the launch had already gained good headway and was out of range.

They shot down the Yukon and soon turned into the Klondike.

For a long time they watched the burning building, until at last the hills hid the flames from their sight.

CHAPTER XI.

CHASED BY THE BLACKBIRD.

"EDITH, I want to know all about this business," said Young Klondike as soon as all danger had passed. "Did you really sign those papers in my name?"

"Yes, I did," replied Edith.

"Forgery, forgery!" cried Dick.

"I don't know—I suppose it is—I didn't mean it for that. I wanted to expose those rascally Claim Agents before the Exchange. I meant that all respectable dealers in mining property in Dawson City should see what a pack of land sharks they really were."

"So that was the sort of shark you were fishing for?" laughed Ned. "Well, I thought as much."

"Did you really guess it, Ned?"

"I felt sure you were trying to find out some of Millard's secrets, and that Zed was doing the same."

"Oh, I ain't half as good a detective as Edith," chuckled the Unknown. "I'm going to give up the business and let Edith hunt for my man."

"Did you suspect it was I who stole your clothes?"

laughed Edith. "Did you really catch onto that, Ned?"

"No, I didn't. I'll own up that I never suspected such a thing, but tell me all about it. I want to know."

Now, it would be useless to detail all that Edith said, and go over all her conversation with the Claim Agents, but there are certain important points that we must speak of before we tell what happened next.

"You may just understand one thing, Ned," said Edith, in conclusion of her story. "Millard meant to kill you and Dick. If possible he meant to entice you into Terry Nolan's den and finish you there; if not you would have been hit with a slingshot or stabbed in the back, and your bodies thrown into the Yukon. Then I was to go to the bank and pretend to be you, and draw out all the money, and we were to divide."

"Oh, the scoundrel!" cried Ned. "I would never have believed that there was such a man in Dawson, and that's the truth."

"But that ain't all," continued Edith. "Now, Ned, I've got something to tell that will please you very much."

"Out with it! Let's have the good as well as the bad."

"Rice is a myth. We are rightful owners of the claim."

"Hooray!" shouted Dick, tossing up his hat at the risk of losing it overboard. "Our side is in it every time!"

"Can you prove this, Edith?" asked Ned. "It is most important if you can."

"Of course, I can't prove it. I only have Millard's word for it. He told me so in his office while we were laying out the plot against you."

Ned shook his head doubtfully.

"Of course, we knew that before, or at least we suspected it. Don't think I'm throwing cold water on your discovery, Edith, for it really is important; but to be able to give a clear title to it we've got to have actual proof."

Now, Edith was very much disappointed, and she showed it in the conversation which followed.

The Unknown suddenly burst out into a loud laugh.

"That's the way it goes," he chuckled; "every man to his business, and every woman, too. Edith, my dear, you have the making of a splendid detective about you, but you are not one yet—not by a long chalk."

"Don't claim to be," flashed Edith, "and to be plain with you, Ned, I don't see any occasion for that remark."

"Hold on! By the Jumping Jeremiah, I've got something to say."

"Say it!" cried Ned, "and don't let us get into any argument."

"What is it that we need to clear the title to our claim and beat the land sharks of Dawson City out of their boots?"

"Written proof that Rice is a myth, and Manton Millard a fraud."

"Oh, everybody knows the last, and I can furnish the first."

"You can!" exclaimed Edith. "Then my work will be made complete."

"That's just it, Edith. That's just where the knowledge of an old hand at the bellows comes in."

"Out with it!" exclaimed Ned. "Let's have it and bring this business to an end."

"I'll give it to you," said the Unknown, gravely, "when I get my man."

And with this they had to be content, for the Unknown would not say another word on the subject, but they all know him well enough by this time to feel certain that there was method in his madness, and that something would come of it in the end.

The only hint they had of his meaning was when he turned suddenly to Ned and said:

"By the way, that girl was straight. She didn't mean to betray you; her scheme was to give you a chance to save the gold."

"How do you know? Have you seen her?" asked Ned, eagerly.

Then the Unknown gave one of his chuckling laughs and answered:

"I'll tell you all about it when I've caught my man."

Meanwhile, the launch was making splendid time up the Klondike, and they had seen nothing of the Blackbird.

The condition of affairs was too good to last.

"There comes the steamer!" cried Dick suddenly.

The Blackbird had just appeared around the big bend, which the Klondike takes just after you leave the Yukon.

Her decks were still crowded with men.

Moreover, she had run up the police flag.

The boys knew now that the Northwestern police had joined issue with Manton Millard and the other Claim Agents.

The burning of the Exchange had brought them under the ban of the law.

"That flag means stop, and if we don't stop it means fight, and if we get licked in the fight it means the stone jug for all hands."

"They can't catch us and the flag shan't stop us?" declared Ned. "As for the Exchange, we'll build them a new one at our own expense, and make good every cent's worth of damage that Edith's shot did."

For an hour and more the chase continued.

The Blackbird gained on the launch slowly but steadily.

Dick grew very much concerned.

"They'll overhaul us sure," he said at last. "What is to be done?"

"If we can make the mouth of Bonanza Creek before them, we are all right," said the Unknown.

"What do you say that for?" demanded Ned.

"Can't they catch us on Bonanza Creek as well as on the Klondike? If you know any reason why not, Zed, I wish you'd spit it right out."

"I know a very good reason why not," chuckled the detective.

"What is it?"

"Tell you later."

"Great Scott! And we worried half to death! Why can't you tell us now?"

"Do you know Barney McGraw?" was the Unknown's singular reply.

"Why, of course we know Barney McGraw. What do you mean by that?" retorted Ned.

They all knew Barney well enough.

He was the owner of a small and moderately successful claim on the Klondike near the mouth of Bonanza Creek.

"I'll tell you what I mean later," chuckled the Unknown, "when I catch my man."

It seemed a poor time for joking, but this was the Unknown's way and there was no changing it.

While he talked the detective was giving his full attention to the little naphtha engine, and we need scarcely say that he sent the launch ahead for all it was worth.

But the best speed it was capable of making was not sufficient to keep it out of reach of the Blackbird.

By the time they drew near Barney McGraw's claim the launch was only a short distance ahead of the steamer.

The men on board crowded to the bow, and all hands could be seen watching them intently.

Ned turned his glass upon them.

"There's Millard!" he cried at last. "I see the scoundrel! There's two of the Northwest police with him."

"They'll be firing at us next!" said Dick. "Zed, if you are ever going to catch your man and tell us what to do this is about the time."

"Just a few moments," replied the Unknown. "Patience, just a few moments more. I'd rather tell my name than give away my scheme too soon."

They were almost at Barney McGraw's now.

Quite a crowd of miners had collected on the little wharf in front of the mine, and were watching the chase with great interest.

Among them was Barney himself.

What this man—friendly though he was—could possibly do to help them neither Ned nor Dick could guess, and Edith was just as much in the dark about it as the boys.

A moment more and the steamer came within hailing distance.

A man leaned over the rail and making a speaking trumpet of his hand, shouted:

"Hello there! On board the launch!"

"Hello!" roared the Unknown, whose voice was like a fog horn and could be heard half a mile away.

"I command you to stop in the name of the queen!" bawled the man.

"The queen be smothered!" replied the Unknown, but he didn't say it loud enough for the police on the steamer to hear, which was perhaps just as well, as

the insult to the crown might have brought a shower of shot.

"You'll stop or it will be the worse for you!" shouted the policeman. "We shall fire into your boat if you don't!"

"Great ganders! How nice you could pick that fellow off, Edith!" said the Unknown.

"Certainly I won't do anything of the sort," replied Edith. "It's one thing to fire at a land shark when your life is in danger, but that man is a government officer. It would be good-by to the Klondike for us if we were to kill him."

"It can't be done, of course," said Ned. "Zed, out with it! Are we going to land at Barney McGraw's?"

"Yes," said the Unknown, "that's just what we are going to do."

The words had hardly left his lips when three shots were fired from the steamer.

"By gracious, they'll shoot us if we don't shoot them!" cried Dick.

At the same instant the launch stopped suddenly and began to fill.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, they've put a hole through the side under water!" gasped the detective, "and hang me, if the engine hasn't broken down, too!"

A shout from the steamer showed that the situation was thoroughly understood.

There was no more firing.

It was not necessary.

When Millard leaned over the rail, and roared out:

"We've got you now! We've got you now!" it looked very much as if he spoke the truth.

But it was no easy matter to down the Unknown.

"Get out the oars!" he said, coolly; "we've got to row to Barney McGraw's!"

There was only one pair of oars on the sinking launch, but then Barney's little wharf was close by.

Loud shouts of triumph went up from the steamer, but the men on the wharf, awed by the police flag made no sign, although they were among Young Klondike's stanchest friends, and he now had many scattered among the different mines.

"It's no use," shouted the policeman; "you can't get away from us! Hold up there, and come on board the Blackbird and we'll talk this business out."

"We'll talk it out at Young Klondike's claim!" roared the Unknown.

"That's what we won't!" bellowed Millard. "The claim is mine! You'll never set foot on it again!"

"We'll see about that!" called Ned. "I want to say to you gentlemen of the Northwest police that I'm responsible for every dollar's worth of damage done to the Exchange, and am prepared to make it good!"

"That's what you'll have to!" retorted the policeman. "Go ahead, if you will! Barney's wharf is all right for us to land at! We'd just as soon take you there as anywhere else."

The time had about come to prove these words true or false.

A moment later and the launch shot in under Barney's wharf.

A few turns of the Blackbird's wheel would bring her alongside.

"Hello, Barney!" cried Ned, as the good natured mine owner came running down the bank to meet them.

"Hello, Young Klondike! Is it the bobbies that's chasing yez? Sure I didn't bargain for that."

"The plan goes through!" exclaimed the Unknown, jumping out of the sinking launch. "Barney, you got my word?"

"Sure and I did, boss."

"Horses all ready?"

"All ready saddled behind the shaft house."

"Blessings on you, Barney. Boys do you understand my scheme now?"

Two minutes later our little party, mounted on swift horses, were galloping away among the hills.

"That comes from being a professional," chuckled the Unknown. "I took time by the forelock and ordered these horses here in case we needed them before ever you made a move, Edith, and that's the way we old detective's work."

"There goes the Blackbird!" cried Dick.

They had come out upon the top of a hill where they could look down on Barney's camp.

The Blackbird was just pulling away from the wharf, heading toward the mouth of Bonanza Creek.

CHAPTER XII.

EDITH KILLS THE BLACKBIRD AND GOLDEN & LUCKEY GET THEIR CLAIM.

"WHERE is she now?"

"I don't see her."

"Nor do I, and yet she can't be very far away."

Ned took the glass from Dick and looked back down the line of Bonanza Creek.

It lay spread out before them like a silver ribbon, winding in and out among the hills, for Young Klondike and his party had reached the top of the ridge.

It had been hard work forcing their horses up the mountain side, but they accomplished it.

Now they were about to descend into the great valley of El Dorado Creek, a valley which is destined to produce more gold than any other in the world in the near future.

When they looked off to the right they could see a long way up El Dorado, which joined with Bonanza Creek at the foot of the mountain.

The air was black with the smoke of many fires built on the frozen earth.

"I see the Young Klondike," cried Edith, pointing—"there it is."

"You're wrong," declared the Unknown. "That's

Jim Naylor's place; the Young Klondike is around the bend behind the hill."

"That's so," said Ned. "You can't get a sight of the mine from here, Edith, but it won't take us but a mighty short time to get there. See, we can follow that gulch down, it's almost clear of timber, and thus strike up along the shore."

"There's the Blackbird," said Dick. "She's just coming around the bend."

"I wish she'd run on the rocks and go to pieces," snapped the Unknown. "No such good news, though."

"They'll hardly try to move her up El Dorado," said Ned, leveling his glass at the little steamer which was crawling on toward the Roaring Bulls.

"I don't know," replied the detective. "It has been done and they may try to do it again. The Blackbird draws mighty little water. I heard Captain Jakes say he could sail her on the sweat of a water pitcher, and it wouldn't surprise me a bit if he meant to run her right up to the mine."

"Then it will be a fight to a finish," declared Ned.

"Ye gods and little fishes! If it ain't I'll eat my head!" cried the detective. "That's what I'm out for every time."

They watched the progress of the steamer for a moment or two, and saw her pass safely through the Bulls.

"No time to lose now!" declared the Unknown. "Off we go for the Young Klondike. By the Jumping Jeremiah, I hope the rest of my scheme works out as well as the first part did. Then Golden & Luckey get their claim and no land shark will ever dare to try to swallow them again."

"What is the rest of your scheme?" asked Ned, pocketing his glass.

"Tell you when I get my man," chuckled the Unknown.

After that it was no use to say anything, of course.

They sprang upon their horses and went bounding down the mountain side.

Now, while it was necessary to be on the alert, there was really no need of any great haste.

The route across the mountains was much shorter than by the creeks, and the Blackbird still had a long stretch of Bonanza to travel before she could reach the mouth of El Dorado Creek.

By the time this stage of her journey was accomplished, Young Klondike and his party came down on the shore of El Dorado Creek, and a short run brought them opposite the mine.

Everything was going on as usual.

Smoke was pouring out of the big stack of the mill, they could see the men moving around the ore house, and all seemed busily at work.

It was necessary to go still further up the creek where there was a shallow place, which the horses could easily ford.

Above this ford it would be impossible for the Black-

bird to go, but with care the little steamer might be brought up abreast of the mine.

When Young Klondike rode in among his men a shout of welcome went up.

The miners dropped their tools and came crowding about the boss, for everyone loved him, as was proved by the fact that where other claim owners found it simply impossible to hold their men, Ned had no trouble at all.

He treated them liberally.

Not only was the pay on the Young Klondike fully up to the standard, ten dollars a day, but each man was allowed a percentage of the gold he actually dug.

This arrangement worked splendidly.

Ned's men were all laying up money, for, in addition to the percentage, Ned had another hold on them.

He furnished all provisions at his own expense.

It paid better to work for Golden & Luckey than to prospect poor claims on one's own account.

"Everything is going all right, boss," said Mr. Bowers. "I'll guarantee that not an ounce of gold dug since you went away is unaccounted for."

"Boys, I expected nothing less than this!" said Ned. "I know you have all done your best for the firm, and I believe you always will."

"That we will, boss!" cried a rough Cornishman. "We know when we're well off, we do! I blame near starved before I struck Golden & Luckey, but now I'm right in it with both feet."

"I want you to be in it with both hands, too. Boys, all of you listen to me! Who'll fight for Golden & Luckey as well as work for them. Let the man who ain't willing to do it step back."

"We'll all fight for the firm!" shouted one.

"To the death!" cried another.

"We'll stand by Young Klondike forever!" cried a third.

Not one stood back.

"Against the land sharks of Dawson City!" continued Ned, in his clear, ringing voice. "There's a big gang of them coming up the creek in the Blackbird now. They'll be here before many moments have passed; they came to oust us from our claim."

The excitement was tremendous.

The miners to a man broke out with cheers for the boss, swearing eternal fidelity to Young Klondike.

Picks and shovels were thrown down and all hands ran for their rifles.

"Form in line, boys!" shouted Ned. "We won't wait for them to come up to the Young Klondike. We'll head them off down the creek and give it to them from both sides. No shooting to kill. Let's drive them back by fair means if we can, by force if we must, but no one on the Blackbird to-day must plant his foot on our claim."

It was not necessary to say another word.

Ned had every miner on the work ready to do his bidding then.

He divided his force and started down El Dorado Creek to meet the steamer.

Dick took half the men and crossed to the opposite side of the creek.

Ned and Edith led the others down on the side where they were, and it was not until they were just starting that he suddenly missed the Unknown.

"Where in the world is Zed now?" he asked Edith.

"The last I saw of him he was going toward the house," replied Edith.

"Ride over and see if he is there," said Ned; "you can catch up with us before we have gone far."

But when Edith overtook them, she had nothing to report.

Mrs. Colvin, who was left in charge of the house, had not seen the Unknown.

"Another of his queer moves," cried Ned. "Never mind! He'll turn up at the right time, and don't you forget it. There comes the Blackbird! Now, the fun is going to begin."

The steamer had just come in right around a bend in the creek, leading for the narrow channel between the rocks where Barker's boat had been wrecked.

"She's too big to go between the rocks," cried Mr. Bowers.

"No, she ain't! She can make it!" shouted Dick from the opposite shore.

"Now is the time for us to show our strength!" shouted Ned. "Give 'em a salute, boys! Let 'em see what they have to expect if they come on."

This was just what the Young Klondikers wanted.

Up went every rifle, and the shots echoed back from among the hills.

It created some excitement among the men on the steamer, but there was no turning back.

On the contrary, Captain Jakes, who was in the wheel-house, steered straight for the channel.

Millard's gang could be seen pressing forward.

Their rifles were all ready; as soon as they came in range it looked as though there might be some pretty hot work.

All at once Ned saw Manton Millard bustling about at the bow.

He seemed to be giving orders to his men.

They were pulling something heavy along the deck.

"Hey, Ned! Look! Look, they've got a cannon!" shouted Dick from the opposite shore.

It was so.

There was a small cannon on the Blackbird.

Millard had it placed so that by swinging it around it could command either shore.

"We'll sweep you off the earth, Young Klondike!" he roared. "You had better make up your mind to surrender before there's damage done."

"Edith! Edith!" suddenly shouted a voice from the hill above the cave.

All turned in the direction of the sound.

There was the Unknown with his tall hat jammed on the back of his head coming down the hill with a young girl.

"Why it's May Barker!" exclaimed Ned. "This is Zed's secret! How in the world——"

But the rest of his sentence was drowned by the Unknown's fog horn voice, for now he shouted again:

"Edith! Edith! Throw them on the rocks! You can do it, my dear!"

Edith shot one quick glance at the Blackbird. She saw instantly what the Unknown meant.

The Blackbird was now entering the narrow channel between the rocks.

The moment she had passed them she would be in comparatively deep water, and what was more, the cannon would be brought to action, for it was already within range.

Millard stood ready to touch it off.

Unless the progress of the steamer was arrested trouble was bound to come.

All this Edith saw as she flung up her rifle.

Three times she fired in quick succession, but once would have done.

She did not aim at Captain Jakes, but she did aim at the pilot-house windows above his head.

Each shot broke its pane and sent a shower of glass down upon the head of the master of the Blackbird.

This did the business, just as the Unknown foresaw.

Captain Jakes dodged down, lost his grip on the wheel, and in less time than it takes to tell it the Blackbird was on the rocks with a big hole stove in her bow.

She heeled over so violently that Millard and his toughs were all thrown in a heap against the rail, and many went into the creek after the cannon, which tore away the guards and fell into the water with a resounding splash.

A shout of triumph went up from the Klondikers.

They rushed down upon the steamer on both sides of the creek.

The Claim Agents' gang were at their mercy now.

"Land on the other shore and make yourselves scarce!" shouted Ned. "We own this claim and we'll defend it to the last. Those who keep on the move shall not be interfered with, but the first man who turns this way dies."

This settled it.

The toughs crawled out of the creek and hurried away, glad of the chance to escape, Millard and the policemen going with the rest.

Ned permitted Captain Jakes and his crew to remain by the steamer.

"We'll help you get her off," he was saying when the Unknown and May Barker came up.

"That's the talk, Edith. By the Jumping Jeremiah, you brought down the Blackbird, and look here, Young Klondike, see the present I've brought you. Found the girl in Dawson City, and sent her on ahead up here."

May Barker held out her hand toward Ned.

In it was a package of letters.

"Take them, Mr. Golden," she said. "You risked your life to save mine, and I don't forget. These

papers prove your ownership to the Young Klondike. I got them from Manton Millard."

* * * * *

There is a good deal more that we could say as to the successful ending of Young Klondike's fight with the land sharks of Dawson City, but it is useless to indulge in a long ending when our story is practically told.

The letters given Young Klondike were from Manton Millard to Edith's father. They disclosed the full details of the plot, and the rascally Claim Agent, over his own signature, admitted that Golden & Luckey were the rightful owners of the Young Klondike Claim.

Nothing more was needed.

Ned and Dick went back to Dawson City two days later prepared to prosecute Millard, but only to find that he had left for parts unknown.

Ned called on Mr. Berry and gave the firm's check

for the entire cost of a new building to take the place of the burned Exchange. There was no talk of arrest. The richer members of the Exchange declared themselves fully satisfied, and upheld Ned in the part he had played.

In a few weeks the purchasers of the adjoining claims were on the ground and hard at work, fully satisfied with their purchases which turned out to be very rich mines in every instance.

Young Klondike was now more popular than ever.

But Ned could not remain idle.

The question of the claim settled, he at once started in a new enterprise which led himself and Dick, Edith and the Unknown, through a series of highly interesting adventures which will be described in the next issue of this series, entitled :

YOUNG KLONDIKE'S NEW DIGGINGS; OR, THE GREAT GOLD FIND ON OWL CREEK.

[THE END.]

YOUNG : GLORY.

PATRIOTIC WAR STORIES.

LITHOGRAPHED COLORED COVERS.

32 Solid Reading Pages.

EVERY STORY COMPLETE.

Price 5 Cents! Price 5 Cents!

ALREADY PUBLISHED:

No. 1. Young Glory, the Hero of the White Squadron,

By Commodore Morgan

No. 2. Young Glory on Shore; or, Fighting For the Stars and Stripes,

By Author of Young Glory

No. 3. Young Glory and the Spanish Cruiser; or, A Brave Fight Against Odds,

By Author of Young Glory

No. 4. Young Glory in Cuba; or, Helping the Insurgents,

By Author of Young Glory

FOR SALE BY ALL NEWSDEALERS OR WILL BE SENT TO ANY ADDRESS ON RECEIPT OF PRICE, 5 CENTS PER COPY. ADDRESS

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher,

29 West 26th St.,

New York.

YOUNG KLONDIKE.

Stories of a Gold Seeker.

Handsomely Colored Covers.

32 PAGES. ISSUED TWICE A MONTH.

Price 5 Cents.

Price 5 Cents.

No. 1. Young Klondike; or, Off For the Land of Gold,

By An Old Miner

No. 2. Young Klondike's Claim; or, Nine Golden Nuggets,

By Author of Young Klondike

**No. 3. Young Klondike's First Million; or, His Great Strike on
El Dorado Creek,**

By Author of Young Klondike

**No. 4. Young Klondike and the Claim Agents; or, Fighting the
Land Sharks of Dawson City, By Author of Young Klondike**

**No. 5. Young Klondike's New Diggings; or, The Great Gold Find
on Owl Creek,**

By Author of Young Klondike

Issued Wednesday, May 11th.

Order No. 5 From Your Newsdealer NOW.

For Sale by All Newsdealers, or will be Sent to Any Address on Receipt
of Price, 5 Cents Per Copy, by

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher,

29 West 26th St.,

New York.

AMERICAN LABEL CO. LITH. NEW YORK.